

EUROCONTROL guidance notes for pilots

9. Getting Aeronautical and Meteorological Information in Flight



AIRSPACE INFRINGEMENT

Infringement of controlled airspace, danger and restricted areas, etc. is a serious aviation hazard and occurs when an aircraft enters the airspace without permission. This happens several times a day in the busiest areas of European airspace.

This is one of a series of Guidance Notes (GN) intended to help you keep out of trouble. The others are listed at the foot of the next page.

It is the pilot's responsibility to ensure that he/she is fully briefed before flight. Nevertheless, occasionally a pilot needs to discover some important piece of information once in the air - perhaps it is the activity state of a particular danger area, or what the weather will be at a particular airfield. Also, the authorities may wish to inform pilots of some important piece of safety information, like a severe weather warning or an avoidance zone around an accident.



It has been found that some pilots simply do not know that the restricted airspace (airway, control zone, prohibited, restricted or danger area) is there, or that it must not be entered without permission. The procedure for finding out about airspace reservations before flight is described in GN 3 (Getting Aeronautical Information Before Flight).

This briefing note deals with the procedure for getting aeronautical (and meteorological) information in flight - and how pilots are informed of important safety information.

FLIGHT INFORMATION SERVICES

A flight information service (FIS) provides information for the safe and efficient con-

duct of flights, and can also be used to activate or close filed Flight Plans (in some circumstances they may be able to accept airborne filing of a Flight Plan). The service is automatically available from controllers within controlled airspace (CAS), but is also provided outside CAS on dedicated frequencies as listed in the national AIP (see GN 3). In addition, Air Traffic Controllers or Flight Information Service Officers at aerodromes may be able to provide the service. Information available can include any or all of the following, if the pilot requests it:

- The state of activity of danger or restricted areas,
- The serviceability of navigation aids,
- The condition of aerodromes, runways and associated facilities,
- Weather conditions reported or forecast (METAR and TAF) for specified airfields,
- Significant en-route weather (SIGMET information),
- Any other information likely to affect air safety. For example, if the controller is aware of traffic in the same area at a similar level, he may be able to pass Traffic Information.

Controllers will use the FIS (and the international emergency frequency 121.5 MHz) to transmit messages concerning safety, such as those notifying Restricted Airspace (Temporary) around search and rescue operations. Pilots should therefore use the FIS wherever possible, or listen on that emergency frequency.

RADAR SERVICES

Outside CAS, in addition to a FIS, air traffic radar services may be available from civilian or sometimes military controllers (see the national AIP), and should be used if available. The radar service may offer information, in which case the pilot is responsible for seeing and avoiding other traffic; or may offer advice about recommended avoiding action. In any case, ensure the controller knows what you are doing and any changes you intend to make so that he can provide you with the best service.

Where radar service cannot be provided a "procedural" service may be offered, in which the controller advises the pilot of other traffic based on levels and positions reported by other pilots.

A pilot requesting a radar service should establish RTF communications with the appropriate Air Traffic Service Unit on the appropriate frequency (see GN 3), and then pass the following information:

- Callsign and type of aircraft,
- Point of departure and destination,
- Estimated position and level,
- Intentions (such as proposed routing)
- Type of service requested (for example radar information service, radar advisory service etc.)

Traffic conditions may prevent a controller providing the service requested, make sure you know what service is being provided at all times.

VHF WEATHER BROADCASTS (VOLMET)

Throughout Europe, certain stations transmit airfield weather information for major airfields continuously on a VHF frequency (VOLMET). The AIP and commercial flight guides list the stations which do this, their frequencies, and the airfields included. Such information is made available by the meteorological service providers, too.

ATIS BROADCASTS

Many airports provide an automated terminal information service (ATIS). This is a continuous broadcast on a VHF frequency which is listed in AIPs and commercial flight guides (see GN 3). Many aerodromes also provide the same service by telephone for pre-flight briefing.

ATIS broadcasts are updated regularly and are allocated a code letter sequentially. They include the following information:

- Name of airport, ATIS code letter and time of report,
- Runways and types of approaches in use, runway conditions, serviceability of navigation aids, and other information regarding the airfield, such as radio frequencies for initial contact.
- Airfield met information - (wind, visibility and runway visual range (RVR) if appropriate, weather, cloud, temperature, and altimeter settings.)

To reduce radio traffic, arriving or departing aircraft are expected to copy the ATIS before making two way radio contact, and advise ATC of the ATIS code that has been received with the appropriate

altimeter setting included in that broadcast. They will then be informed if the ATIS is updated subsequently.

EMERGENCIES

If you ever experience a major problem in the air, become lost, or just require help, call a radar unit for assistance as soon as you need it. If that is impossible, call "PAN PAN" or "MAYDAY" on the emergency frequency 121.5 MHz, and select 7700 on your transponder. If a radar unit cannot identify you, a passing airliner may relay messages. Call from as high an altitude as possible for maximum range.

HAVE A SAFE FLIGHT

We hope you have found this useful. If you have any suggestions for improvement, please let us know.

OTHER GUIDANCE NOTES

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2. Flight preparation
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4. Getting Meteorological Information Before Flight
5. Using Meteorological Information for Planning
6. Visual Navigation
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8. GPS Navigation
9. Getting Aeronautical & Met Information In Flight
10. Entering Controlled Airspace
11. Getting the Most out of your Transponder

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