



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Advisory Circular

Subject: TRAFFIC ADVISORY PRACTICES
AT AIRPORTS WITHOUT OPERATING
CONTROL TOWERS

Date: 5/21/90
Initiated by: ATA-430

AC No: 90-42F
Change:

1. **PURPOSE.** This **advisory** circular (AC) contains good operating practices **and** procedures for use when approaching or **departing** airports **without** an operating control tower **and** airports that have **control** towers operating part time. This AC has been updated to include changes in radio frequencies and phraseology.

2. **ANCELLATION.** Advisory Circular **90-42E**, dated November **23, 1988**, is cancelled.

3. **REFERENCES.** The **following** AC's also contain information applicable to operations at such uncontrolled **airports**.

a. **AC 90-66**, Recommended Standard Traffic Patterns for Aircraft Operations at Airports Without Operating Control Towers.

b. **AC 150/5340-27A**, Air-to-Ground Radio Control of Airport Lighting Systems.

4. **DEFINITIONS.**

a. **COMMON TRAFFIC ADVISORY FREQUENCY (CTAF) - A** designated frequency for the purpose of carrying out airport advisory practices while operating to or from an airport **that** does not have a **control** tower or an airport where the **control** tower is not operational. The **CTAF** is normally a **UNICOM, MULTICOM**, flight service station (**FSS**) frequency, or a tower frequency. **CTAF** will be **identified** in appropriate aeronautical publications.

b. **UNICOM - A** nongovernment air/ground radio communication station which may provide airport information at public use airports.

c. **MULTICOM - A** mobile service, not open to public **correspondence** use, used for essential communications in the conduct of activities performed by or directed from private aircraft.

d. **MOVEMENT AREA - The** runways, taxiways, and other areas of an airport/heliport which are utilized for taxiing/hover taxiing, air taxiing, takeoff and landing of **aircraft, exclusive** of loading ramps, and parking areas.

5. **DISCUSSION.**

a. In the Interest of promoting safety, the Federal Aviation Administration, through its Airman's Information Manual, Airport Facility Directory, Advisory Circular, and other publications provides frequency information, good operating practices, and procedures for pilots to use when operating to and from an airport without an operating **control tower**.

b. There is no substitute for awareness while in the vicinity of an airport. It is essential that pilots remain alert and look for other traffic and exchange traffic information when approaching or

departing an airport without the services of an operating control tower. This is of particular importance since other aircraft may not have communication capability or, in some cases, pilots may not communicate their presence or intentions when operating into or out of such airports. To achieve the greatest degree of safety, it is essential that all radio-equipped aircraft transmit/receive on a common frequency identified for the purpose of airport advisories.

c. The key to communicating at an airport without an operating control tower is selection of the correct common frequency. The CTAF for each airport without an operating control tower is published in appropriate aeronautical information publications. The CTAF for a particular airport can also be obtained by contacting any FSS. Use of the appropriate CTAF, combined with visual alertness and application of the following recommended good operating practices, will enhance safety of flight into and out of all such airports.

d. There are two ways for pilots to communicate their intentions and obtain airport/traffic information when operating at an airport that does not have an operating tower: by communicating with an FSS that is providing airport advisories on a CTAF or by making a self-announced broadcast on the CTAF.

6. RECOMMENDED TRAFFIC ADVISORY PRACTICES. All inbound traffic should continuously monitor and communicate, as appropriate, on the designated CTAF from a point 10 miles from the airport until clear of the movement area. Departing aircraft should continuously monitor/communicate on the appropriate frequency from startup, during taxi, and until 10 miles from the airport unless the Federal Aviation Regulations or local procedures require otherwise.

7. AIRPORT ADVISORY SERVICE (AAS) PROVIDED BY AN FSS.

a. An FSS physically located on an airport may provide airport advisory service (AAS) at an airport that does not have a control tower or where a tower is operated on a part-time basis and the tower is not in operation. The CTAF's for FSS's which provide this service are published in appropriate aeronautical publications.

b. An FSS AAS provides pilots with wind direction and velocity, favored or designated runway, altimeter setting, known traffic, Notices to Airmen, airport taxi routes, airport traffic pattern, and instrument approach procedures information. Pilots may receive some or all of these elements depending on the current traffic situation. Some airport managers have specified that under certain wind or other conditions, designated runways are used. Therefore, pilots should advise the FSS of the runway they intend to use. It is important to note that not all aircraft in the vicinity of an airport may be in communication with the FSS.

c. In communicating with an FSS on CTAF, establish two-way communications before transmitting outbound/inbound intentions or information. Inbound aircraft should initiate contact approximately 10 miles from the airport. Inbounds should report altitude, aircraft type, and location relative to the airport; should indicate whether landing or overflight; and should request airport advisory. Departing aircraft should, as soon as practicable after departure, contact the FSS and state the aircraft type, full identification number, type of flight planned; i.e., visual flight rules (VFR) or instrument flight rules (IFR), the planned destination or direction of flight, and the requested services desired. Pilots should report before taxiing, before entering the movement area, and before taxiing onto the runway for departure. If communication with a UNICOM is necessary, pilots should do so before entering the movement area or on a separate transceiver. It is essential that aircraft continuously monitor the CTAF within the specified area.

d. Examples of **AAS** phraseology:

(1) Inbound:

VERO BEACH RADIO, CENTURION SIX **NINER** DELTA DELTA ONE ZERO MILES SOUTH, **TWO** THOUSAND, LANDING **VERO** BEACH. REQUEST AIRPORT ADVISORY.

(2) outbound:

VERO BEACH RADIO, CENTURION SIX **NINER** DELTA DELTA, READY TO TAXI, **VFR**, DEPARTING TO THE SOUTHWEST. REQUEST AIRPORT ADVISORY.

8. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY AERONAUTICAL ADVISORY STATIONS (UNICOM).

UNICOM stations may provide pilots, upon request, with weather information, wind direction, the recommended runway, or other necessary information. If the **UNICOM** frequency is designated as the **CTAF**, it will be identified in appropriate aeronautical publications. If wind and weather information are not available, it may be obtainable from nearby airports via Automatic Terminal Information **Service** or Automated Weather Observing System frequency.

9. SELF-ANNOUNCE POSITION AND/OR INTENTIONS.

a. General. "Self-announce" is a procedure whereby pilots broadcast their position, intended flight activity or ground operation on the designated **CTAF**. This procedure is used primarily at airports which do not have a control tower or an **FSS** on the airport. The self-announce procedure should also be used when a pilot is **unable** to communicate with the local **FSS** on the designated **CTAF**.

b. If an airport has a **control** tower which is either temporarily closed or operated on a part-time basis and there is no operating **FSS** on the airport, pilots should use the published **CTAF** to self-announce position and/or intentions.

c. Where there is no tower, **FSS**, or **UNICOM** station on the airport, use **MULTICOM** frequency **122.9** for self-announce procedures. Such airports will be identified in appropriate aeronautical information publications.

d. Practice Approaches. Pilots conducting practice instrument approaches should be particularly alert for other aircraft that may be departing in the opposite direction. When conducting any practice approach, regardless of its direction relative to other airport operations, **pilots** should make announcements on the **CTAF** as **follows**:

- (1) when departing the final approach **fix**, inbound;
- (2) when established on the final approach segment or immediately upon being released by **ATC**;
- (3) **upon** completion or termination of the approach; and
- (4) upon executing the missed approach procedure.

NOTE: Departing aircraft should always be alert for **arrival** aircraft that are **opposite direction**.

10. UNICOM COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES.

a. In communicating with a **UNICOM** station, the **following** practices will help reduce frequency congestion, facilitate a better understanding of pilot intentions, help identify the **location** of aircraft

in. the traffic pattern, and enhance safety of flight:

- (1) Select the correct **CTAF** frequency.
- (2) State the identification of the **UNICOM** station you are calling in each **transmission**.
- (3) Speak slowly and distinctly.
- (4) Notify the **UNICOM** station approximately **10** miles from the **airport, reporting altitude, aircraft type, aircraft identification, location relative to the airport, and whether landing or overflight.** Request wind information and runway in use.
- (5) Report on downwind, base, and final approach.
- (6) Report leaving the runway.

b. Examples of UNICOM Phraseologies:

(1) Inbound:

FREDERICK **UNICOM** CESSNA EIGHT **ZERO ONE TANGO FOXTROT 10 MILES SOUTHEAST** DESCENDING THROUGH (ALTITUDE) LANDING FREDERICK, REQUEST **WIND** AND RUNWAY INFORMATION FREDERICK.

FREDERICK TRAFFIC CESSNA EIGHT ZERO ONE TANGO FOXTROT **ENTERING** DOWNWIND/BASE/FINAL (AS APPROPRIATE) FOR ● RUNWAY ONE NINE (FULL STOP/ TOUCH-AND-GO) FREDERICK.

* FREDERICK TRAFFIC CESSNA ~~EIGHT ZERO~~ ONE TANGO FOXTROT CLEAR OF RUNWAY ONE NINE FREDERICK. *

(2) Outbound:

FREDERICK **UNICOM** CESSNA EIGHT **ZERO ONE TANGO FOXTROT (LOCATION ON AIRPORT)** TAXIING TO RUNWAY ONE NINE, REQUEST WIND AND **TRAFFIC** INFORMATION FREDERICK.

FREDERICK TRAFFIC CESSNA EIGHT ZERO ONE TANGO FOXTROT DEPARTING **RUNWAY ONE** NINE. 'REMAINING IN THE PATTERN' or "DEPARTING THE PATTERN **TO THE (DIRECTION)** (AS APPROPRIATE)" FREDERICK.

11. EXAMPLES OF SELF-ANNOUNCE PHRASEOLOGIES. It should be noted that aircraft operating to or from another nearby airport may be making self-announce broadcasts on the same **UNICOM** or **MULTICOM** frequency. To help identify one airport from another, the **airport name should be** spoken at the beginning and end of each self-announce transmission.

(1) Inbound:

STRAWN TRAFFIC, APACHE **TWO TWO FIVE ZULU**, (POSITION), (**ALTITUDE**), (**DESCENDING**) OR ENTERING DOWNWIND/BASE/FINAL (AS APPROPRIATE) RUNWAY ONE SEVEN FULL STOP, TOUCH-AND-GO, **STRAWN**.

* **STRAWN** TRAFFIC APACHE ~~TWO TWO~~ FIVE ZULU CLEAR OF RUNWAY ONE SEVEN **STRAWN**.

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(2) ~~Outbound:~~

~~STRAWN TRAFFIC, QUEENAIRE SEVEN ONE FIVE FIVE BRAVO (LOCATION ON AIRPORT) TAXIING TO RUNWAY TWO SIX STRAWN.~~

~~STRAWN TRAFFIC, QUEENAIRE SEVEN ONE FIVE FIVE BRAVO DEPARTING RUNWAY TWO SIX DEPARTING THE PATTERN TO THE (DIRECTION), CLIMBING TO (ALTITUDE) STRAWN.~~

(3) Practice ~~Instrument~~ Approach:

~~STRAWN TRAFFIC, CESSNA TWO ONE FOUR THREE QUEBEC (NAME - FINAL APPROACH FIX) INBOUND DESCENDING THROUGH (ALTITUDE) PRACTICE (TYPE) APPROACH RUNWAY THREE FIVE STRAWN.~~

~~STRAWN TRAFFIC, CESSNA TWO ONE FOUR THREE QUEBEC PRACTICE (TYPE) APPROACH COMPLETED OR TERMINATED RUNWAY THREE FIVE STRAWN.~~

12. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES.

FACILITY AT AIRPORT	FREQUENCY USE	COMMUNICATION/BROADCAST PROCEDURES		
		OUTBOUND	INBOUND	PRACTICE INSTR APCH
a. UNICOM (no Tower or FSS)	Communicate with UNICOM station on published CTAF frequency (122.7, 122.8, 122.725, 122.975, or 123.0). If unable to contact UNICOM station, use self-announce procedure on CTAF.			
b. No Tower, FSS, or UNICOM	Self-announce on MULTICOM freq. 122.9	Before taxiing and before taxiing on the runway for departure	10 miles out, and entering downwind, base, and final, and leaving the runway.	Departing final approach fix (name) inbound, and approach completed/terminated
c. No Tower in Operation, FSS Open	Communicate with FSS on CTAF			
d. FSS Closed (No Tower)	Self-announced on CTAF			
e. Tower or, FSS not in Operation	Self-announced on CTAF			

13. **IFR AIRCRAFT** When operating in accordance with an **IFR** clearance, if air traffic **control (ATC)** approves a change to the advisory frequency, change to and monitor the **CTAF** as soon as possible and **follow** the recommended traffic advisory procedures.

14. **GROUND VEHICLE OPERATION.** Drivers of airport ground vehicles equipped with radios should monitor the **CTAF** frequency when operating on the airport movement area and remain clear of **runways/taxiways** being used by aircraft. Radio transmissions from ground vehicles should be confined to safety-related matters.

15. **RADIO CONTROL OF AIRPORT LIGHTING SYSTEMS.** Whenever possible, the **CTAF will be** used to control airport lighting systems at airports without operating **control** towers. This eliminates the need for pilots to change frequencies to turn the lights on and allows a continuous listening watch on a single frequency. The **CTAF** is published on the instrument approach chart **and in** other appropriate aeronautical information publications. For further details concerning radio controlled lights, see AC **150/5340-27**.

16. **DESIGNATED UNICOM/MULTICOM FREQUENCIES.** The following listing depicts appropriate **UNICOM** and **MULTICOM** frequency used as designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Use</u>
122.700 -----	Airports without an operating control tower
122.725 -----	Airports without an operating control tower
* 122.750 -----	Air-to-air communications & private airports (not open to the public)
122.800 -----	Airports without an operating control tower
* 122.900 -----	(MULTICOM FREQUENCY) Activities of a temporary, seasonal, or emergency nature.
122.925 -----	(MULTICOM FREQUENCY) Forestry management and fire suppression, fish and game management and protection, and environmental monitoring and protection.
122.950 -----	Airports with control tower or FSS on airport
122.975 -----	Airports without an operating control tower
123.000 -----	Airports without an operating control tower
123.050 -----	Airports without an operating control tower
123.075 -----	Airports without an operating control tower

NOTE 1: In some areas of the country, frequency interference may be encountered from nearby airports using the same **UNICOM** frequency.. Where there is a problem, **UNICOM** operators are encouraged to develop a "least interference" frequency assignment plan for airports **concerned** using the frequencies designated for airports without operating **control** towers.

***UNICOM** licensees are **encouraged** to **apply** for **UNICOM 25 kHz spaced** channel frequencies. Due to the **extremely** limited number of frequencies with **50 kHz channel spacing**, **25 kHz channel spacing** should be **implemented**. **UNICOM** licensees may then request FCC to assign **frequencies** in accordance with the plan, which FCC will review and consider for **approval**.*

NOTE 2: Wind direction and runway information may not be available on **UNICOM** frequency **122.950**.

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17. USE OF UNICOM FOR ATC PURPOSES. UNICOM SERVICE MAY BE USED FOR ATC PURPOSES, only under the following circumstances:

- a. Revision to proposed departure time.
- b. Takeoff, arrival, or flight plan cancellation time.
- c. **ATC** clearance, provided arrangements are made between the **ATC** facility and the **UNICOM** licensee to handle such messages.

18. MISCELLANEOUS. Operations at airports without operating control towers require **the highest** degree of vigilance on the part **of** pilots to see and avoid aircraft while **operating to or from such airports. Pilots should** stay alert at all times, anticipate the **unexpected, use** the **published CTAF** frequency, and follow recommended airport advisory practices.



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