



Safety net – pilot responsibilities for obtaining information in-flight

Pilots are responsible for obtaining information necessary to make operational decisions.

Obtaining information pre-flight and in-flight to make operational decisions is important to the conduct of safe flight. It is important to understand what responsibilities you have to obtain information pre flight, what information needs to be requested in-flight and what is given automatically by air traffic control (ATC).

In-flight

There are three sources of in-flight information available to the pilot:

- ATC initiated Flight Information Service (FIS) ③ Automatic Broadcast Services
- an on-request service.

These are designed to support your responsibility to obtain information in-flight on which to base operational decisions in relation to your flight.

ATC initiated FIS

ATC initiated FIS includes the provision of operational information such as:

- meteorological conditions and the existence of non-routine MET products
- changes to serviceability of navigation facilities
- changes in conditions of aerodrome and associated facilities.

This service is mainly designed to inform you of unexpected or non-routine information. It is also important to understand what you must request and what ATC will inform you of.

You will not automatically receive routine TAF information showing deteriorating weather conditions if you are en route to a location. This information must be requested.

ATC initiated flight information will only be provided to aircraft receiving an ATC service, or aircraft otherwise known and in two-way communication with the relevant ATC units. A VFR aircraft tracking outside of controlled airspace, even with a submitted flight plan will not necessarily be 'known' to ATC.

ATC initiated FIS is limited to aircraft in two-way communications, within one hours flight time of the condition or destination at the time of ATC receipt of the information.

The exception to this is SIGMET information, which will cover a portion of the route up to two hours flying time ahead of the aircraft. If an aircraft becomes airborne after the ATC broadcast the pilot may not be aware of the changes.

AIRMET availability is broadcast, and repeated in the hour following the initial broadcast (H+15 and H+45).

When providing FIS, ATC will not alert you to the availability of aerodrome weather reports that are available from an automatic broadcast service.

If there is a sudden change to a component of flight information that is not described in a current MET product or NOTAM having an immediate and detrimental effect on the safety of an aircraft, this will be communicated by ATC as a "hazard alert".

If a runway closes at your destination and you are within one hour's flight time, you are known and in two-way communications with ATC, you will receive the information.

If the change will be prolonged, ATC will repeat the hazard alert at H+15 and H+45 in the hour following the initial transmissions.

These broadcasts will normally cease after one hour or after an updated MET product or NOTAM is available for dissemination - whichever is earlier.

ATC is not required to inform you of a runway closure if you are an IFR aircraft inbound to an aerodrome with a closed runway that was notified via NOTAM more than one hour ago.

Automatic broadcast service

Pilots should take advantage of Automatic Broadcast Services to obtain information on which to base operational decisions. The automatic broadcast services available are:

- Automatic Terminal Information Service (ATIS)
- Automatic En Route Information Service (AERIS)
- Aerodrome Weather Information Service (AWIS)
- Meteorological Information for Aircraft in Flight (VOLMET).

Consult AIP for more information on these services. Remember ATC will not alert pilots to the availability of aerodrome weather reports that are available from an automatic broadcast service.

On request service

An on-request FIS is available to aircraft in all classes of airspace on ATC VHF or HF frequencies.

Pilots must prefix any request for FIS on ATC VHF frequencies with the callsign of the appropriate ATC unit and the generic callsign 'FLIGHTWATCH'. eg. 'MELBOURNE CENTRE FLIGHTWATCH'.

Due to workload considerations, ATC may re-direct pilot requests for FIS to an alternative VHF frequency or Flightwatch HF.

Further information is available in AIP GEN 3.3. Understanding your responsibilities for obtaining information is important to conducting a safe flight.

More information

More pilot safety information is available on the Airservices website at bit.ly/pilotsafety.



If you have any feedback or questions about this publication please email, safetypromotions@airservicesaustralia.com.



View more pilot safety material at bit.ly/pilotsafety.

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