



Safety net – the view from the Parafield Tower

Controllers at Parafield Tower are seeing a growing number of safety concerns, particularly operational deviations, runway incursions and failure to action ATC instruction correctly. These challenges are frequently heightened by congestion in frequency usage and a need for greater comprehension of radio telephony requirements.

Parafield is a busy Metro D aerodrome, with a large portion of the traffic comprising of initial pilot training activities. The aerodrome layout is complex, with multiple parallel runways and complex taxi routes. Further, the Parafield Control Zone is relatively small and is surrounded by complex airspace associated with the Edinburgh Military Control Zone and the Adelaide Control Zone. High-speed operations by military aircraft occur immediately to the north of Parafield, while RPT jets and turboprops operate to and from Adelaide immediately to the south of Parafield.

The increasing volume of aircraft operating within the limited space of the Parafield Control Zone poses an elevated safety concern due to the potential for unsafe operations, particularly from low-experience or private pilots. The following are the primary types of unsafe operations currently observed by controllers at Parafield Tower, along with some tips to help prevent them.

Remember, ATC is there to help. They encourage you to seek assistance rather than proceeding and potentially increasing the risk to yourself and other airspace users.

General

Observed behaviour: instances of contacting ATC on an incorrect frequency or position, as well as confusion regarding procedures or positions.

Plan for your intended operations at Parafield. ERSA contains aerodrome maps and descriptions of the standard arrival and departure procedures which will be used to deconflict you from other traffic. The VTC contains depictions of surrounding controlled airspace as well as commonly used visual points.

ERSA advises where to contact ATC when inbound. Parafield Tower generally does not monitor traffic beyond the first inbound (DMW/OHB) and outbound (SKI/SUB) points outside of the Control Zone boundary. Contacting the tower early when inbound (for example, at the WRR or RMH) to obtain a traffic statement is not the most effective approach. Other aircraft may be at or approaching the inbound point that have not yet made their calls. Calling Parafield Tower too early may lead to confusion regarding the sequence of arriving traffic and could provide an inaccurate depiction of traffic at the inbound point. Additionally, it can contribute to frequency congestion and increase ATC workload. Instead, calling overhead the inbound point with your callsign, type, position, altitude, received ATIS information, and intentions will offer the most accurate air picture for both ATC and other pilots.

Parafield uses multiple tower frequencies - the ATIS will provide guidance on which one to use for your intended operation and which runway it is associated with. Remember to listen to the ATIS in its entirety to ensure you receive all critical information.

On the ground

Observed behaviour: taxiing, crossing runways and holding points, or commencing take off without clearance.

These actions can potentially cause a loss of separation from other aircraft. An increased workload for ATC can also result, causing subsequent delays for other airspace users.

Taxi clearance is required prior to taxiing anywhere on the manoeuvring area, e.g. upon vacating the runway after landing, initial taxi to a run-up bay or leaving the run-up bay after engine runs. Include your position on the aerodrome to assist ATC and other pilots or airside drivers to identify you and guard against the probability of the instruction being directed at the wrong aircraft.

You must have a specific clearance from ATC to enter, cross, taxi along, line up on, backtrack on, land on or take off from any runway (even if that runway is not the runway in use). Familiarise yourself with the runway incursion hotspots shown in ERSA, and if in doubt, ask.

After landing, remain on tower frequency until clear of the runways, then contact Parafield Ground for taxi clearance. If you need to stop prior to contacting Parafield Ground, try to leave room for a second aircraft to vacate the runway behind you.

In the air

Observed behaviour: not sighting or following preceding traffic, commencing turns or climbing or descending contrary to instruction.

These actions can result in potential loss of separation from other aircraft. They also cause increased communications and workload for ATC resulting in subsequent delays in air traffic coordination and activity.

When Parafield Tower issues an instruction to follow another aircraft, it is the responsibility of the pilot to sight that aircraft and follow by adjusting speed and tracking to ensure that a safe distance is maintained. If you are unable to either sight the aircraft or follow safely, you must advise ATC. This is a common occurrence on departure and in the circuit where aircraft will often turn crosswind or base without positively identifying the aircraft that they are following.

Parafield Tower will often issue sequencing instructions to arriving aircraft via a leg of the circuit - be familiar with where these positions are and how they differ from one another. Track to intercept the beginning of the circuit leg that you have been assigned. Remember that you may be assigned a particular segment of a circuit leg (such as early or mid-downwind, or long or short final) or issued a wide circuit or close base. Remember that these instructions are designed to place you in a safe position relative to other traffic.

If in doubt as to where you should be tracking or which altitude you have been assigned, ask ATC.

On the radio

Observed behaviour: instances of not promptly responding to instructions, omitting necessary readbacks, and occasionally speaking over other aircraft or ATC transmissions.

Always maintain a listening watch on the radio by ensuring:

- you are on the correct frequency
- your radio is working and turned up
- you use the information gained from listening to build your situational awareness and to assist you to see- and-avoid other aircraft.

Use standard phraseology in radio calls to ensure ATC understands your intentions and confirms that you have understood your clearance. Familiarise yourself with standard readback requirements at AIP GEN 3.4 - 12.

Listen to what is occurring on the frequency - if ATC and/or another aircraft are conversing wait until all responses and required readbacks have occurred before attempting to transmit.

While waiting for departure at the holding point take note of the traffic disposition on the runway, as well as on final. Aircraft on final that have not yet received a runway clearance will be a priority over your "ready" call, so try not to block the frequency at this point.

More information

For more specific operational information about flying around Adelaide, please access CASA's Stay OnTrack series at

casa.gov.au/resources-and-education/publications-and-resources/industry-guides-and-publications/pilot-guides/stay-ontrack-series

If you have any questions or would like to provide us some feedback on this material, please email us at safetypromotions@airservicesaustralia.com.