

Section 2. Radio Communications Phraseology and Techniques

4-2-1. General

a. Radio communications are a critical link in the ATC system. The link can be a strong bond between pilot and controller or it can be broken with surprising speed and disastrous results. Discussion herein provides basic procedures for new pilots and also highlights safe operating concepts for all pilots.

b. The single, most important thought in pilot-controller communications is understanding. It is essential, therefore, that pilots acknowledge each radio communication with ATC by using the appropriate aircraft call sign. Brevity is important, and contacts should be kept as brief as possible, but controllers must know what you want to do before they can properly carry out their control duties. And you, the pilot, must know exactly what the controller wants you to do. Since concise phraseology may not always be adequate, use whatever words are necessary to get your message across. Pilots are to maintain vigilance in monitoring air traffic control radio communications frequencies for potential traffic conflicts with their aircraft especially when operating on an active runway and/or when conducting a final approach to landing.

c. All pilots will find the Pilot/Controller Glossary very helpful in learning what certain words or phrases mean. Good phraseology enhances safety and is the mark of a professional pilot. Jargon, chatter, and “CB” slang have no place in ATC communications. The Pilot/Controller Glossary is the same glossary used in FAA Order JO 7110.65, Air Traffic Control. We recommend that it be studied and reviewed from time to time to sharpen your communication skills.

4-2-2. Radio Technique

a. **Listen** before you transmit. Many times you can get the information you want through ATIS or by monitoring the frequency. Except for a few situations where some frequency overlap occurs, if you hear someone else talking, the keying of your transmitter will be futile and you will probably jam their receivers causing them to repeat their call. If you have just changed frequencies, pause, listen, and make sure the frequency is clear.

b. **Think** before keying your transmitter. Know what you want to say and if it is lengthy; e.g., a flight plan or IFR position report, jot it down.

c. The microphone should be very close to your lips and after pressing the mike button, a slight pause may be necessary to be sure the first word is transmitted. Speak in a normal, conversational tone.

d. When you release the button, wait a few seconds before calling again. The controller or FSS specialist may be jotting down your number, looking for your flight plan, transmitting on a different frequency, or selecting the transmitter for your frequency.

e. Be alert to the sounds *or the lack of sounds* in your receiver. Check your volume, recheck your frequency, and *make sure that your microphone is not stuck* in the transmit position. Frequency blockage can, and has, occurred for extended periods of time due to unintentional transmitter operation. This type of interference is commonly referred to as a “stuck mike,” and controllers may refer to it in this manner when attempting to assign an alternate frequency. If the assigned frequency is completely blocked by this type of interference, use the procedures described for en route IFR radio frequency outage to establish or reestablish communications with ATC.

f. Be sure that you are within the performance range of your radio equipment and the ground station equipment. Remote radio sites do not always transmit and receive on all of a facility’s available frequencies, particularly with regard to VOR sites where you can hear but not reach a ground station’s receiver. Remember that higher altitudes increase the range of VHF “line of sight” communications.