
IRELAND

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Guidance on VFR flight in Airspace Classes C and G and Information on the Provision of Flight Information and Alerting Service therein.

1. **Introduction**

This Notice is for pilots conducting their flights in Ireland under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) and provides information and guidance on;

- The types of air traffic service (ATS) provided in controlled airspace (ICAO Class C) and uncontrolled airspace (ICAO Class G).
- The organization of airspace
- Pilots' responsibilities
- Flight planning
- Light Aviation Sporting Activities

2. **Air Traffic Services**

There are three types of Air Traffic Service available;

- Air Traffic Control Service
- Flight Information Service
- Alerting Service

3. **Air Traffic Control (ATC) Service**

An ATC service is provided to pilots of aircraft operating under VFR in controlled airspace (Class C).

- A flight plan (FPL) is required for VFR flights in controlled airspace and should be filed in advance. In certain circumstances, flight plan details will be accepted by Radio Telephony (R/T) by the relevant ATC unit.
- An ATC clearance is required before entry to controlled airspace.
- An ATC unit will issue clearances to ensure that separation exists between IFR flights and VFR flights. It is vital that pilots of VFR flights comply with ATC clearances. The ATC unit will provide the pilots of VFR flights with traffic information on other VFR flights.
- Where a pilot of a VFR flight cannot comply with an ATC clearance, or if they are having difficulty maintaining VFR, they should advise the ATC unit of this expeditiously. This will enable the ATC unit to offer an alternative clearance.

4. **Flight Information Service (FIS)**

A Flight Information Service (FIS) is available to pilots of aircraft flying in uncontrolled airspace (Class G) who;

- Have filed a FPL
- Make contact with the appropriate ATS unit after becoming airborne.
- Where a FPL has been filed, the ATS unit should be notified by telephone or by R/T, as appropriate, that the flight is about to commence or that it has commenced. This action will activate the FPL and allows the ATS unit to provide a more effective FIS service.
- Where a FPL has not been filed and the pilot is in receipt of a FIS, the ATS unit should be informed, by the pilot, when the flight detail is complete or when they are leaving the frequency. This will assist the ATS unit in its provision of the FIS.
- Where a flight leaves a FIS frequency without contacting the ATS unit, it will be considered to be operating normally. In that instance, an Alerting service will only be initiated where an ATS unit becomes aware that it is required.
- If an ATC service and a FIS are being provided contemporaneously by an individual ATC sector or ATC Tower unit, then the provision of an ATC service will have priority over a FIS.

5. **Alerting Service**

Alerting Service is provided:

- To all aircraft on activated FPLs.
- When it becomes otherwise known to the ATS unit that an aircraft is overdue or is in need of search and rescue.
- When a pilot contacts an ATS unit requesting a radio check or information on local weather / traffic, and subsequently advises that they do not wish to file a FPL, the flight tracking ability of the ATS unit is limited, thus the ATS unit can only provide search and rescue assistance to aircraft if it is requested by the aircraft or if it becomes known to the ATS unit that such a service is required.

6. **Units Providing ATS**

State Airports

State airports are established at;

- Dublin (EIDW)
- Cork (EICK)
- Shannon (EINN)

A Flight Information Service (FIS) is provided by these ATS units within their geographical areas of responsibility.

Non-State Airports

Non-State airports are established at;

Donegal (EIDL)
Sligo (EISG)
Ireland West Airport Knock (EIKN)
Kerry (EIKY)
Waterford (EIWF)
Weston (EIWT)

During the opening hours of the Non-State airports, the local airspace is designated as Class C (controlled) Control Zone (CTR), and an air traffic control (ATC) service is provided by the associated ATS unit within a radius of 10NM of the airfield.

During the opening hours of Donegal, Sligo and Waterford Airports, for operational reasons the local Airspace may revert to Class G. A NOTAM will be issued when this occurs and an Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS) will be provided by the associated airport ATS unit.

Weston is located within the Dublin CTR and as such is always encompassed by controlled airspace. During Weston hours of opening, the ATC service in the Weston Area of Operation is provided by the ATS unit at Weston. Outside of these hours, the aerodrome is closed, and the ATC service is provided by the ATS unit at Dublin Airport. The Military ATS unit at Casement Aerodrome will, when the appropriate EI Restricted Areas are active, provide the service inside certain portions of the Dublin CTR. See AIP Ireland for more details.

When open, a clearance from the aerodrome ATS unit is required to enter the CTR or additional controlled airspace. If intending to fly near these airports, pilots should contact the relevant ATS unit at the airport to establish the status of the airspace. A clearance must be obtained from the ATS unit before entering this additional Class C airspace.

The CTRs and other controlled airspace associated with these aerodromes have varying hours of operation.

Outside of published or notified opening hours for the Non-State airports (except Weston), the airspace reverts to uncontrolled (Class G) and Shannon ATS unit provides a FIS and an Alerting service. The airspace charts and opening and closing hours of operation are contained in either AIP Ireland or in relevant NOTAMs and it should be noted that times may vary to facilitate early arriving or delayed flights

Outside the Published or notified opening hours of the Sligo CTR (where the airspace reverts to Class G –Uncontrolled) and Sligo Airport is published or notified open, an Aerodrome Flight Information Service is provided. Such hours of AFIS are published via NOTAM. Pilots are provided by Sligo AFIS with an Aerodrome Flight Information and Alerting Service, while operating in the local airspace and it should be noted that times may vary to facilitate helicopters on SAR missions based at Sligo.

7. Use of Surveillance for the Provision of FIS in Uncontrolled Airspace (Class G)

Surveillance equipment (radar) may be used to assist the provision of a FIS to aircraft in uncontrolled airspace. This is not an Air Traffic Control service.

At all times when flying in uncontrolled airspace responsibility for the safe conduct of the flight, rests with the pilot in command. Traffic information to flights in uncontrolled airspace may be incomplete as the ATS unit providing a FIS may not be aware of all flights.

8. **International VFR Flights**

A FPL is mandatory for international VFR flights.

If departing on an international VFR flight from an aerodrome located outside controlled airspace, the appropriate ATS unit (see section 3) must be advised of the departure of the aircraft. This can be done in advance by telephone or, after the aircraft is airborne, by R/T. The ATS unit will then ensure that a Departure Message (DEP) is sent to all relevant ATS units, thus ensuring that a FIS and an Alerting service will be provided until the FPL is closed.

9. **Flight Plan Closures**

Temporary FPL closure is provided for in ICAO Document 'PANS ATM DOC 4444'. Where a flight advises that it is executing an intermediate stop, the provision of a FIS cannot resume until the pilot advises the ATS that;

The flight has recommenced (by R/T).

The flight is about to recommence (by telephone).

FPLs that have been activated must be closed.

If an activated FPL is not closed it may lead to Alerting action being initiating. This action may be anything up to and including the launch of an SAR Helicopter. Such resources are valuable and costly. Pilots are strongly requested to adhere to flight plan closure requirements in order that search and rescue resources remain available to those who really need them.

10. **Light Aviation Sporting Activities**

Pilots of VFR flights should be aware that significant light aviation sporting activities, such as ballooning, gliding, parachuting and micro light flying, take place on a routine and non-routine basis within the Shannon FIR.

Where the activity is routine, and has been notified to the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), pilots will not be informed by ATS units providing a FIS, as the details, including coordinates, of any such activities are published in AIP Ireland ENR 5.5 Section 6.2.

Where the activity is non-routine, and has been notified to the appropriate ATS unit providing a FIS, pilots that may be affected will be provided with information on the activity.

Non-routine activities may also take place without being notified to the IAA or ATS units. Consequently, the FIS unit concerned will be unable to provide details of the activity.

Pilots should always exercise caution when in the vicinity of areas of activity.

11. **Supplementary Information**

Phone Numbers for the activation/closing of FPLs:

Flights operating in the area of responsibility of Shannon ATS:

00 353 61 770725

00 353 61 770700

Flights operating in the area of responsibility of Dublin ATS:

00 353 1 806 7400

FPLs may also be activated once airborne, by R/T, on the appropriate ATS/FIS frequency.

This Aic expires June 2015.