

A PILOT'S GUIDE
TO THE
AUTOMATED
FLIGHT SERVICE
STATION

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

SJT AFSS
San Angelo, Texas

PILOT'S GUIDE
TO THE
AUTOMATED FLIGHT SERVICE STATION

Whether you are an "old-timer" who nostalgically remembers the good old days when the Flight Service Station was in that little building on your local airport, or a nervous new student who finds the Automated Flight Service Station telephone system more of a challenge than crosswind landings - this booklet is for you.

Just as electronics and new technology have updated the cockpit, so modernization has come to the flight service station. We hope that this guide will help you become more familiar, and more comfortable, with our services and, at the same time, help us to give you better service.

Your comments and questions are welcomed and appreciated. Our administrative phone number is 915-944-8791.

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AUTOMATED FLIGHT SERVICE STATIONS

AL:	Anniston	NE:Columbus
AZ:	Prescott	NV:	Reno
AR:	Jonesboro	NJ:	Millville
CA:	Hawthorne	NM:	Albuquerque
	Oakland	NY:	Buffalo
	Rancho Murieta		Islip
	Riverside	NC:	Raleigh
	San Diego	ND:	Grand Forks
CO:	Denver	OH:	Cleveland
CT:	Bridgeport		Dayton
FL:	Gainesville	OK:	McAlester
	Miami	OR:	McMinnville
	St. Petersburg	PA:	Altoona
GA:	Macon		Williamsport
ID:	Boise	SC:	Anderson
IL:	Kankakee	SD:	Huron
IN:	Terre Haute	TN:	Jackson
IA:	Fort Dodge		Nashville
KS:	Wichita	TX:	Conroe
KY:	Louisville		Fort Worth
LA:	DeRidder		San Angelo
ME:	Bangor	UT:	Cedar City
MI:	Lansing	VT:	Burlington
MN:	Princeton	VA:	Leesburg

MS: Greenwood
MO: Columbia
St. Louis
MT: Great Falls

WA: Seattle
WV: Elkins
WI: Green Bay
WY: Casper

TO ACCESS THE AUTOMATED FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SYSTEM

1. To reach the San Angelo Automated Flight Service Station, dial the local number 944-9315 or the toll-free number 1-800-WX-BRIEF (1-800-992-7433).
2. A recorded welcome will identify the AFSS you have reached, and will advise you to remain on the line if you wish to speak to a briefer. Your call will be answered by the next available briefer (a real person)> If you are using a touch-tone phone, you may access the main menu or other special features by pressing the proper three digit code.

In all areas of the Southwest Region, and in most of the contiguous 48 states, the 1-800-WX-BRIEF number will enable you to access an AFSS. When flying in Idaho, Mississippi, and West Virginia, check the Airport Facility Directory for the appropriate Flight Service Station number.

The FAA Southwest Region consists of the states of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. The Automated Flight Service Stations (AFSS's) are located at San Angelo (SJT), Conroe (CXO), and Fort Worth (FTW), TX; DeRidder (DRI), LA; Jonesboro (JBR), AR; McAlester (MLC), OK; and Albuquerque (ABQ), NM.

MAIN MENU - 636

To access the Main Menu at SJT AFSS, press 636. The Main Menu lists the three digit codes for the Telephone Information Briefing Service (TIBS) routes, or other information available at the AFSS you are calling.

At the end of the menu, you will hear a tone. After the tone, press the three digits for the requested route, or for any of the other special features.

You may interrupt the menu or any recorded information, including the welcome announcement, by pressing the pound (#) symbol and then the (*) symbol.

To talk with a briefer after listening to any of the recordings, press the

star symbol and then 99.

If you are using a Merlin phone system, you must press the pound symbol twice whenever its use is indicated.

TIBS

Telephone Information Briefing Service replaces the former PATWAS information. TIBS recordings provide weather data for frequently travelled routes or areas pertinent to each AFSS. Recordings are updated during the day at four or five hour intervals, or whenever there are significant changes in current or forecast conditions.

The TIBS at each AFSS will include information pertinent to the area.

TIBS recordings available at SJT AFSS:

- 201 - SAT-AUS-DFW route
- 202 - SAT-HOU route
- 203 - Texas, south of a LRD-CRP line
- 204 - 50nm radius of SAT
- 207 - 50nm radius of AUS
- 209 - Current conditions at SJT-SAT-AUS-DFW-HOU-MFE
- 210 - Terminal forecasts for SJT-SAT-AUS
- 211 - Terminal forecasts for DFW-HOU-MFE
- 212 - Forecast winds aloft for SAT-DAL-HOU-BRO-ABI-INK
- 216 - Tropical Storm and Hurricane Advisories in the Gulf of Mexico
- 217 - Special events
- 218 - (November to January) Information on the South Texas Hunting Season
- 222 - Information on how to obtain a quality weather briefing
- 224 - Instructions of using the Automated Telephone System
- 333 - Fast File

Other routes or information may be added to this list as needed. Listening to the complete Main Menu occasionally will keep you updated on changes.

At SJT AFSS, the first four recording may be accessed directly through special numbers:

- 201 - Dial 1-800-433-8103
- 202 - Dial 1-800-433-8105
- 203 - Dial 1-800-433-8106
- 204 - Dial 1-800-433-8107

FAST FILE - 333

Fast File is a system by which a pilot may record flight plan information without waiting to speak to a briefer. The "Fast" in Fast File means only that it saves time for the pilot - not that the flight plan enter the ATC system sooner.

When using Fast File, speak distinctly and use phonetic spelling for nav aids, intersections, and for the pilot's name. Give all information for the blocks on the printed flight plan form and be sure that all routing information is correct. Giving incorrect data or failing to provide all information may result in the delay or loss of the flight plan.

Each AFSS may have specific requirements for use of Fast File - for instance, San Angelo AFSS limits the service to IFR flight plans only. Listen to the instructions given for Fast File at the AFSS you are calling. Filing time requirements vary also, but at no AFSS should you use the Fast File for proposed departures less than thirty minutes from filing time.

OTHER HELPS

It is suggested that pilots take time to become familiar with the services available through the automated call director system at the AFSS.

Pilots using rotary dial phones may ask the briefer to transfer them to one of the recorded features.

OBTAINING A WEATHER BRIEFING

There are certain items of background information the briefer must know before the briefing can begin:

1. Aircraft identification (tail number). If unknown, state your last name.

2. Departure point and destination. Specify the city (and airport, if more than one is located at that city).

3. Proposed time of departure (Zulu) and estimated time enroute.

Other items the briefer should know to give you all pertinent information for your flight:

1. Type of flight - IFR or VFR.

If you want to go VFR but are instrument qualified and equipped, state that you can go IFR if necessary.

2. Rout of flight, if not going direct, and any planned stops enroute.

3. Planned altitude, or requested winds aloft levels.

4. Type of aircraft.

5. Type of briefing requested - standard, abbreviated, or outlook.

If you are going to file a flight plan, you may do so before the briefing to avoid repeating the background information.

TYPES OF BRIEFINGS

STANDARD BRIEFING

This is the complete briefing. It will include the following information which usually will be given in the order listed:

1. Flight precautions. Advisories such as sigmets, airmets, convective sigmets, etc. and forecast precautions for IFR, thunderstorms, turbulence, icing, or low level windshear.

2. A statement that VFR flight is not recommended if IFR conditions exist or are forecast at any point during your planned VFR flight.

3. Synopsis. A brief summary of the cause of the weather, pertinent to your flight.

4. Current conditions. The weather that exists at your departure point, enroute, and at your destination. Includes pilot weather reports (PIREPS) and radar. Departure and destination temperature and dewpoint should be given

whenever the spread is 5 points or less.

5. Enroute forecast. Expected conditions along the route at the time of your flight.

6. Destination forecast. Conditions expected to exist for your estimated time of arrival, including significant changes expected within one hour before and after your ETA.

7. Forecast winds aloft. Predicted wind direction and velocity at specified mean sea level altitudes. Briefers may summarize by points of the compass or state in specific forecast direction.

8. NOTAMS. "D" Notices to Airmen for departure and landing airports and outages of nav aids enroute. "L" NOTAMS are available only to the Flight Service Station having responsibility for the airport.

Published information will be given on request.

9. ATC delays. Flow control or known traffic delays.

The briefer will give information on specific MOAs, Military Training Routes, and Restricted Areas, upon request. It is the pilot's responsibility to know which routes or areas affect the proposed flight.

ABBREVIATED BRIEFING

This is used to supplement weather data received from another source or to update an earlier standard briefing. If you want only one or two items, specify the information you are requesting. If updating, specify the time the earlier briefing was received and information will be limited to changes that occurred after that time.

OUTLOOK BRIEFING

To be used when calling six hours or more prior to departure time. An outlook briefing should be followed by a standard briefing prior to departure. Requesting an update when the original briefing was an outlook may mean that important information could be missed.

BRIEFING TIPS

Try to let the briefer finish the briefing before asking questions. If you have asked for a standard briefing, your questions probably will be answered

during the briefing.

If you are a student pilot and/or will be writing down some of the data you are given, don't hesitate to give the briefer that information.

Remember - the briefer is there to help you!

FILING A FLIGHT PLAN

Flight plans are required for IFR and DVFR flights; they are good insurance for VFR flights.

IFR flight plan information in blocks 2-11 is transmitted to the Center. On VFR plans, only the information in blocks 2,3, and 9, plus a computed ETA, is sent to the destination tie-in FSS/AFSS.

The following items are listed in the order of the blocks on the printed flight plan form.

1. Type of flight. VFR, IFR, DVFR.
2. Aircraft identification. The full call sign of the aircraft.
3. Aircraft type/navigational equipment. The manufacturer's designator for the make only, not the model, followed by "slant" and the equipment code. For compatibility with ARTCC computers, only four characters are used for aircraft type, such as PA28, MO20, BE35, C550. Model suffixes, such as 161, J, RG, etc. are not used on flight plans.
4. True airspeed. (Knots).
5. Departure point. The identifier for the airport. IFR flight plans to be picked up enroute should list the fix from which the route will begin.
6. Proposed time of departure. (Zulu).
7. Altitude. For the initial portion of the flight. Choose a correct altitude for type and direction of flight.
8. Route of flight. VFR - not necessary unless it is to be a long flight and/or you plan stop(s) enroute. IFR - airways or fixes you plan to use. Be sure the information is correct.
9. Destination airport. The identifier.

10. Estimated time enroute. Total time to destination (in block 9) in hours and minutes.

11. Remarks, if any.

12. Fuel on board. Usable fuel in hours and minutes.

13. Alternate airport. If required for IFR flight.

14. & 17. Pilot information. Last name (spell if not obvious) and first name or initial. City of residence. Airport where aircraft is based and the fixed base operation if more than one located on the airport. Home phone number. Destination contact, especially for VFR one-way flights.

15. Number on board. Total number of people on board the aircraft.

16. Color of aircraft. Base color followed by trim color(s).

EQUIPMENT SUFFIX CODES (for block 3)

X = no transponder

T = 4096 code transponder only

U = transponder; encoding altimeter

D = DME only

B = DME; transponder

A = DME; transponder; encoding altimeter

W = RNAV only

C = RNAV; transponder

R = RNAV; transponder; encoder

TIME CONVERSION

For Coordinated Universal Time (Zulu), add the specified number of hours to local time:

EST + 5; CST + 6; MST + 7; PST + 8;

EDT + 4; CDT + 5; MDT + 6; PDT + 7.

FILING TIPS

The Piper Seneca, Cheyenne, Arrow, and Aztec are entered in ARTCC computers as PASE, PAYE, PARO, and PAZT respectively.

VFR flight plans are retained for only one or two hours, depending on

the type of equipment used at the Flight Service Station. If your departure time is delayed beyond the retention time, you may have to refile. A VFR flight plan always may be activated earlier than the proposed time.

ARTCC Computers generally hold IFR flight plans for two hours, and a delay longer than that may require refile. Thirty minutes before the proposed time, flight plan information automatically will print out on a flight strip at the ATC facility responsible for issuing the clearance. Although the clearance facility can request the strip earlier, it is best to call a Flight Service Station to request a change of proposed time whenever your departure will be more than thirty minutes early or more than one and a half hours late.

In some remote locations, pilots will request that a VFR flight plan be filed and activated as an "assumed departure." If this is done, it is imperative that the pilot notify the FSS immediately if the departure is delayed or cancelled.

ARTCC computers will reject an IFR route if the first fix is too far outside the departure center boundary. A good rule is to include at least the first fix within each center; however, the computer will accept distant locations or fixes if the latitude/longitude coordinates are given. Coordinates also should be given if you are using an NDB as a fix because the computers do not recognize non-directional beacons.

When filing IFR, especially if using Fast File, be sure to link airways with the correct nav aids. Although you may be given radar vectors to an off-airport airway, the flight plan must specify an intersection or point where the airway will be joined.

Most vector departures are not computer-compatible as part of a route, but may be included in remarks.

It is not necessary to specify "No SIDS or STARS" in remarks if the departure airport does not have a SID (Standard Instrument Departure) or the destination does not have a STAR (Standard Terminal Arrival Route).

Flight Service Stations no longer keep a file of pilots' names and addresses, so the statement "on file with FSS" is not valid information for block 14 of the flight plan form.

VFR pilots are advised to file a flight plan for each leg of a long trip, to take advantage of the benefits provided by Search and Rescue procedures. Filing a VFR flight plan with several hours estimated time enroute could cause an untimely delay in beginning the search for an aircraft that was overdue because of problems enroute.

IFR pilots who want to file a flight plan and pick up the clearance enroute, should give the departure point as a navaid or fix at least ten minutes ahead along the route. Time is needed to enter the flight plan into the system and to coordinate the clearance with ATC.

Instrument students who file flight plans for training flights should list the flight instructor as the pilot in block 14 of the flight plan.

Pilots who fly outside the United States should be aware that other countries have different laws and different airspace procedures. It is the responsibility of the pilot to become familiar with these laws and procedures prior to the flight.

Most foreign countries have laws requiring flight plans for all flight within the country. All pilots are urged to review the foreign airspace and entry restrictions published in the International Flight Information Manual (IFIM) prior to a flight to a foreign country.

For transborder flight to and from the United States, you must file a flight plan and notify customs. If you want the Flight Service Station to make the required customs notification for you, include that request in the remarks section of your flight plan.

For flights to and from Mexico, you must file an IFR or a DVFR flight plan. The IFR flight plan will be handled as any domestic IFR flight. The DVFR flight plan must be activated and cancelled the same as any domestic VFR plan.

You must file an IFR or VFR flight plan for a flight to or from Canada. For customs notification into Canada, the flight plan, whether IFR or VFR, must be activated. Contact the Flight Service Station and report your actual time of departure, as soon as possible after takeoff.

FLIGHT PLANS AND CLEARANCES

A VFR flight plan should be activated with the departure Flight Service Station as soon as possible after takeoff. In remote areas, or when a low flight altitude hinders good radio communication capabilities, the fixed base operator may relay the activation request by telephone. If the flight plan is not activated at the departure point, any Flight Service Station enroute can relay the information to the departure FSS. In all cases, give the departure airport, destination, and the actual time of departure.

If the time enroute has been under-estimated on a VFR flight plan,

contact any Flight Service Station and request an extension of your flight plan. Give the destination airport and the new estimated time of arrival.

Closing a VFR flight plan is the pilot's responsibility and should be done immediately after arrival at the destination. Contact the appropriate FSS and state that you want to close your flight plan, giving your destination and departure point.

Do not request a tower or approach control to close your VFR flight plan. Controller workload may prevent or delay the relay of your request to the FSS.

In locations where an IFR clearance cannot be obtained by radio while still in the ground, the pilot may contact FSS for a void-time clearance.

Some of the Automated Flight Service Stations have special toll-free numbers just for Clearance Delivery. These numbers are to be used only for relay of IFR departure clearances in areas not controlled by a tower or approach facility, or to cancel a flight plan.

In locations that do not have the special numbers, if you do not know the number, or if the clearance delivery line is busy, you may call the weather briefing number to request your void-time clearance or to cancel your flight plan.

At San Angelo AFSS, the Clearance Delivery number is 1-800-433-8101.

When requesting a clearance, be prepared to give the specialist your call sign, departure point, destination, how soon you can be ready to go, and the runway you will be departing.

IFR flight plans will be activated and cancelled automatically at airports with operating control towers.

If you are landing at a non-tower field and are unable to cancel with approach or center, contact the Flight Service Station as soon as possible to report cancellation and your time of landing.

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

Frequency congestion can be as much of a problem at the Automated Flight Service Station as it is at centers and approach controls. The AFSS specialist may be monitoring as many as 40 communication outlets - several of them on the same frequency - so good radio procedures are important for

the specialist to give, and the pilot receive, the best service.

Give your full call sign. Speak slowly and distinctly. Although your aircraft number is familiar to you, it probably is unfamiliar to the specialist and may even sound unintelligible if given too rapidly.

State the frequency you are using and/or your position. This will save time and will expedite service by enabling the specialist to select the correct outlet and respond to your call.

Wait for the specialist to answer your call. If you do not get an immediate response, it could be for one of several reasons. The specialist may be trying to guess where you are if you did not identify the frequency and location, the specialist may be talking to someone else on another outlet, or the specialist may be answering but your volume control is turned too low.

If you do not receive a response after a few minutes, check your volume control and then call again, stating your call sign, frequency, and location.

Listen to the response. If the specialist has other calls ahead of yours, you may be told to stand by. You will know the specialist is ready for your communication when your call sign is followed by "over" or "go ahead with your request."

Be sure you receive a response. Do not assume that your flight plan has been activated or cancelled unless the specialist acknowledges your request.

If requesting enroute weather, give your position, direction of flight, and your altitude.

If transmitting on frequency 122.1, and listening over a VOR, state the name of the VOR on your initial call. Be sure that your VOR selector is set on voice function, and check that the volume is turned up. The voice capability on some VORs has been decommissioned - check the Airport Facility Directory or sectional charts for information on the voice capability of the VORs you will be using during your flight.

If equipped with dual nav-coms, verify that the selected unit corresponds with the desired frequency.

HIWAS

Hazardous Inflight Weather Advisory Service (HIWAS) is a continuous

broadcast of weather advisories, which may be heard on specific VOR frequencies. In the San Angelo AFSS flight plan area, HIWAS may be heard over the COT, CRP, FST, HRL, JCT, LRD, LLO, MRF, MAF, AND SAT VORs.

RADIO FREQUENCIES In the San Angelo AFSS Flight Plan Area

ALI:		122.6		255.4
121.5		243.0		
AUS:	122.55		255.4	
BGS:	122.4			
BRO:	122.3			
CRP:	122.65		255.4	
COT:	122.2			
DRT:	122.3			
EGP:	122.3			
HRL:	122.35			
INK:	122.05		255.4	121.5 243.0
JCT:	122.3			121.5
LZZ:	122.55			121.5
LRD:	122.3		255.4	121.5
MFE:	122.2		255.4	121.5 243.0
MAF:	122.6		255.4	121.5 243.0
SJT:	122.25		255.4	
SAT:	122.3	122.2	255.4	
UVA:	122.65	121.5		

PILOT WEATHER REPORTS

Pilot Weather Reports (PIREPS) are the most important source of "real-time" weather. You provide a valuable service to other pilots when you give reports of the conditions along your route or at your location, including when the weather is better than forecast to be.

For PIREPS to be valid, certain facts must be given: Location in reference to a VOR, type of aircraft, altitude (especially important for turbulence and icing reports), and the conditions you are reporting. If giving reports of bases or tops, give the type of cloud cover (scattered, broken, or overcast) if possible.

PIREPS should be passed to Flight Watch, Flight Service, or any ATC facility.

FLIGHT WATCH

Enroute Flight Advisory Service (EFAS) or Flight Watch is a service designed to provide timely and meaningful weather advisories.

Contact Flight Watch by giving the name of the control station (if known) and then your call sign and the nearest VOR.

The low altitude Flight Watch frequency is 122.0. High altitude frequencies vary with center boundaries and are listed on enroute charts or on the inside back cover of the Airport/Facility Directory.

ENROUTE FLIGHT ADVISORY SERVICE (EFAS)

Radio Call: Flight Watch - Freq. 122.0

ALBUQUERQUE CENTER HIGH ALTITUDE EFAS OUTLETS

Albuquerque		127.625
Carlsbad	127.625	
El Paso	127.625	
Marfa	127.625	
Tucumcari	127.625	
Zuni	127.625	

FORT WORTH CENTER HIGH ALTITUDE EFAS OUTLETS

Fort Worth	133.775	
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HOUSTON CENTER HIGH ALTITUDE EFAS OUTLETS

De Ridder	126.625	
Grand Isle	126.625	
Rockport	126.625	
Rock Springs	126.625	

MEMPHIS CENTER HIGH ALTITUDE EFAS OUTLETS

Pine Bluff	133.675	
Razorback	133.675	
Walnut Ridge	133.675	

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Search and Rescue operations will be initiated thirty minutes after the estimated time of arrival if a VFR flight plan has not been closed. Specialists will begin the search by contacting the destination airport, the tie-in Flight Service Station for the departure point, and the telephone contact listed on the flight plan.

If the aircraft or pilot is not located by one hour after the ETA, the search will have expanded to include air traffic facilities along the proposed route of flight, and the Rescue Coordination Center at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois will have been alerted. Flight Service Stations along the route will check all airports in their area to determine if the aircraft has landed at other than the intended destination. Police and sheriff's departments may be asked to make visual checks of parking ramps. By two hours after the ETA, the search has become a widespread, all-out effort.

Fortunately, most Search and Rescue operations end with the initial contacts when the forgetful pilot or the aircraft is located safely on the ground. Although there is no penalty for failure to close a flight plan, a considerable amount of time, money, and emotional stress is saved when the pilot remembers to close the plan.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

If you become lost or disoriented during your flight, you may contact the Flight Service Station for assistance. Do not hesitate to ask for help - there are known cases of pilots running out of fuel while trying to determine their position because they did not want to admit to being lost. Requesting inflight assistance will not get you into trouble nor will it be a cause for suspension of your certificate.

When asking for assistance, be prepared to provide specific information. You will be asked your aircraft type and if transponder equipped (you may be given a squawk code for radar identification), the nature of the emergency (lost, low fuel, disoriented), and your desires (just want to know where you are, need guidance to an airport). Other information that will be requested includes altitude, heading, navigation equipment on board, weather at your altitude, true airspeed, and the amount of remaining fuel in hours and minutes.

The AFSS has direction finding (DF) equipment to aid in locating pilots who request help. The equipment displays a radial showing aircraft position from the DF site whenever the pilot transmits or keys the microphone. The specialist can pinpoint the aircraft location by having the pilot make specific

turns or by combing the DF information with VOR or ADF crosschecks.

DF sites and frequencies in the SJT AFSS area of responsibility ar Junction, 122.3; Lampasas, 122.55; and Uvalde, 123.65. These sites also utilize the emergency frequency 121.5.

In areas where Direction Finding equipment is not available, the aircraft position can be determined through VOR and/or ADF orientation procedures.

Stay calm - the specialist is trained and skilled in locating aircraft!

Pilots may request a practice DF steer or orientation at any time. After establishing radio contact with a Flight Service Station in your area, state that you would like to simulate a lost aircraft problem. The specialist will choose the method of orientation based on the equipment available in the location and onboard the aircraft.

Practicing orientation procedures can be a valuable training experience.

VOR FREQUENCIES

ALI		114.5 FST	112.8 MFE	117.2	
AUS	117.1	HRL	108.8	MRF	115.9
BGS	114.3	INK	112.1	PEQ	111.8
BRO	116.3	JCT	116.0	RSG	111.2
COT	115.8	LLO	108.2	SAT	116.8
CRP	115.5	LRD	117.4	STV	113.1
CSI	117.5	LZZ	112.5	SJT	115.1
DLF	114.4	MAF	114.8	THX	111.4