

Real-World ATC Differences

Understand how Flight Simulator's ATC differs from the genuine article



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To provide you with the best ATC system possible in Flight Simulator, we included the features we felt would provide Flight Simulator pilots with a rich and compelling experience. The following list details aspects of Flight Simulator ATC that are either different or enhanced from real-world ATC.

Airport Choices

The ATC menu **Select landing airport** item displays a list of the nearest airports within a 30-mile radius. Airports at the top of the list are closer than those farther down the list.

IFR Routes

All IFR flight plans in Flight Simulator are cleared along the route filed in the **Flight Planner**. All IFR clearances are issued "cleared as filed." Detailed routes are not described in the clearance.

Expect Further Clearance

If you're told to hold during an IFR flight in Flight Simulator, you will not be given an "expect further clearance" time. If you set up a random radio failure, the airspace ahead of you will not be cleared, as the ATC system won't know about your com failure. When ATC does not get a response from you, they will cancel your IFR flight plan.

DPs and STARs

Routes incorporating published DPs or STARs are not issued in clearances and cannot be requested in Flight Simulator. You can still create these routes, however, by customizing waypoints in the **Flight Planner** file. You will still hear ATC clear your flight "as filed" without including a DP or STAR. To learn more about customizing waypoints in routes, see [Creating Custom Waypoints](#) link to [Creating Custom Waypoints](#) at the bottom of Using The Flight Planner.

Lost Communications

Though it is possible to lose a radio in Flight Simulator, ATC does not issue lost communication instructions. In addition, ATC will not know that you've lost communications. If they don't get a response from you, they will cancel your IFR flight plan. In that case, you won't be sequenced or cleared for landing.

Canceling IFR

When you cancel IFR, you'll be asked to confirm that you want to cancel IFR. This prevents inadvertent cancellation of an IFR flight. If you cancel IFR on the way to the runway, ATC will instruct you to taxi to the runway to request a VFR departure from the tower. If you cancel IFR above 18,000 feet, you will not be instructed to descend below 18,000 feet as you would in the real world when flying within positive control airspace (under United States rules).

Cancellation of Flight Following

You can cancel **Flight Following** at any time. If you are on Flight Following or if you are on a transition through controlled airspace, cancellation will occur when you choose to land. If you choose a landing airport from the ATC menu, the radio autotunes the airport frequency and any transition clearance or **Flight Following** is automatically cancelled without any further communication.

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Failure to Respond

When flying under IFR in Flight Simulator, you must respond to controller's instructions. Failure to respond to instructions by ATC will result in cancellation of IFR flight plans.

Flight Service Station (FSS)

You can create IFR flight plans into and out of nontowered airports using the **Flight Planner**. If there is a Flight Service Station frequency at the departure airport, you'll receive your IFR clearance (including a clearance void time) on that frequency. Other FSS services, such as PIREPS, weather, and filing flight plans by radio, are not supported in Flight Simulator.

Interacting with ATC

Unlike in the real world, you don't have to interact with ATC at all. You can fly through controlled airspace without ever calling a controller—and you won't be met by the authorities when you land.

VFR Flight Plans

The Flight Planner doesn't create VFR flight plans; using the **Flight Planner** under VFR is simply a tool to plan your route. In Flight Simulator, you do not need to cancel your flight plan when you arrive at your destination under VFR.

Mode C Equipment

All aircraft in Flight Simulator—except the Schweizer 2–32 sailplane and the historical Century of Flight aircraft—are equipped with Mode C transponders, so ATC always knows your altitude and reports the altitude of other aircraft. ATC in Flight Simulator responds to the Schweizer as though the sailplane has Mode C equipment, however, because Flight Simulator's ATC includes radar coverage everywhere in the world and receives Mode C data on all aircraft. Likewise, ATC announces the altitude of the Century of Flight historical aircraft when reporting them as traffic.

Emergencies

In Flight Simulator, you cannot declare an emergency.

Special VFR and VFR On Top

Requests for Special VFR and VFR On Top are not supported by ATC in Flight Simulator.

Airspace Differences

Although great effort has been made to make the airspace volumes in Flight Simulator adhere to real-world boundaries, some airspace will differ. Airspace sectors and altitude steps may not be modeled exactly as they are in the real world. Some boundaries that do not exist in the real world were created in Flight Simulator for the purpose of broader ATC coverage. Flight Simulator's ATC has perfect radar coverage everywhere in the world.

Airport Differences

There is a tremendous amount of audio recorded for Flight Simulator ATC. More than 3,000 worldwide airport and controlling facilities, hundreds of aircraft types and airline names, and hundreds of basic phrases are offered in 10 different voices. Nontowered airport names are not included, but they are, however, identified by their ICAO identifier. (For example, Crest Airpark is identified as "S36").

Flight Simulator airport and navigational aid data are based on the worldwide Jeppesen NavData database that was available at the time that Flight Simulator was developed. In some cases, that data differs from what you might see in the real world for various reasons. Given the long development cycle necessary to create Flight Simulator, some airport data may change in the real world by the time the product reaches retail shelves.

Three-Decimal-Place Frequencies

All three-decimal-place radio frequencies are shortened to two decimal places (for example, 122.375=122.37).

Intersection Departures

Flight Simulator includes runway intersection data, but does not support requests for intersection departures. You can still make an intersection departure, but there is no specific ATC phraseology to request intersection takeoffs.

ASOS and AWOS

Although real-world ASOS and AWOS use separate frequencies, the two services are the same in Flight Simulator and are reported as AWOS. AWOS does not update continuously in Flight Simulator; it updates when the weather changes or on the hour, whichever comes first.

Ocean Operations

Extended flights across the oceans are no different from any other flights in Flight Simulator. You can file IFR across the ocean, and you'll be handled by ATC during the entire flight. Unlike the real world, there are no areas that lack radar coverage.

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