

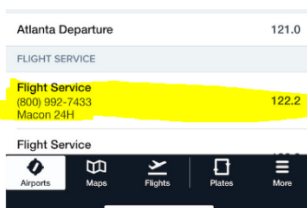
Flying Cross Country and Communications

It's time to venture out away from the security of what you know – your local airport where you have been training for the last 30 or more flight hours. You've got a good handle on landings to include cross wind landings, short field and soft field. You've made calls on the CTAF at Cherokee or Pickens and gained experience talking to the controller at one of our local towered airports; most likely KRYV or KLZU. Now comes the cross country flight. So what's different about it and what you've been doing other than navigating from point A to B. It's communications or more simply COMM as we refer to it. Let's talk about it. There are two agencies you'll be calling Flight Service Station and the Air Traffic Controller for you area. Remember FSS wants to know start time, ATC wants to know your position.

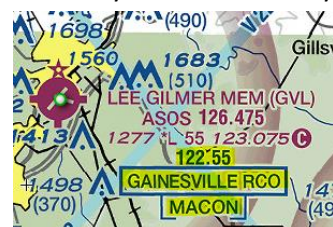
Flight Service. First you filed a VFR ICAO flight plan with flight service. You could have done this by calling 1-800-WXBRIEF or you may have filed it and received your briefing on www.1800wxbrief.com or you may have used Foreflight, Garmin Pilot or one of several others to obtain your digital briefing and file your flight plan. So why do we do that? Very simple, you estimate your time and if you're not back the Flight Service starts looking for you. They first start by calling the number you listed on your plan. Then they start calling the destination FBO. Finally, if you can't be found and an hour has passed they will launch the Civil Air Patrol. It's not so much big brother going with you but more like your dad checking to make sure you got in on time. Filing this does not activate your flight plan. That's your first step once you get airborne and on course. Every wonder why the checklist says "Time Note" on Pre-Take off checklist. It's there for when you make a radio call to activate you can give them the activation time and to determine time from takeoff to your first checkpoint.



Now you're airborne and ready to call. Good preflight planning dictates that you will already have determined the frequency prior to ever going to the aircraft. Where do you get the frequency though?



It's in lots of places. For instance, if you have foreflight, the INFO tab under Airports provides a frequency. However, it's not always the best one to reach FSS. Here at KCNI, if we look closely at the sectional you will see that Gainesville (KGVV) has a Remote Communications Outlet (RCO) for Macon Radio. Thus, when



you are airborne you should call 122.55 to activate your flight plan. This should have been your standby frequency in Comm1 and it should have been selected prior to takeoff. The call you will make should be as follows:

You: Macon Radio, November 2332 Echo

Now you wait for them to respond. **Don't cut somebody else off if you hear talking when you bring up that frequency.** If you don't get a response in 10 seconds try

it again. If you still don't get a response, first ensure you have the correct frequency dialed into the radio. If you skipped the last digit or dialed it in 1 digit off you wouldn't win a prize for being the first to do so. Every pilot has dialed a frequency in wrong at some point. The trick to being a good pilot though is having the proper frequency available to double check at that time. If you have the correct frequency and somebody has not responded use 122.2 or 122.3 or 122.4. You also can find a VOR in close proximity that may also have a frequency that you transmit on but listen on another. This is reflected by an R after the frequency. You'll put 122.1 in Comm1 and you'll have 113.4 in Nav1. You'll also push the NAV1 button on the Audio panel so you can hear their response.



Macon Radio (FSS): Macon radio, go ahead

You: November 2332 Echo would like to activate my flight plan effect 1242 Zulu (*remember this is the zulu time you wrote down before takeoff. Make sure you know how to convert local time to military time (24 hour clock) and how to get zulu time by adding either 4 hours during daylight savings time or 5 when on eastern standard time.*)

Macon Radio: N2332E, your flight plan is activated effective 1242 Zulu. Pilot reports are requested.

You: Affirmative, good day, 2332E.

DON'T FORGET TO CALL 1-800-WXBRIEF WHEN YOU GET BACK TO CHEROKEE AND CLOSE THE FLIGHT PLAN!!!!!!

Flight Following. While opening/activating your flight plan is kind of like your dad checking to make sure you got back when you said you would, flight following is more like your big brother looking over your shoulder the entire time. ATC gives you a discrete code (squawk) for your transponder and then they track that across the sky on radar. They will most likely at some point pass it off to another controller until you finally reach your destination.

Understand that flight following is provided as workload for ATC allows. There may be times when ATC cannot accommodate you. This does not mean the flight must be cancelled. It's just an added safeguard but sometimes it's not possible to get. You should always remain vigilant for traffic.

APPROACH	
Atlanta Approach	121.0
DEPARTURE	
Atlanta Departure	121.0

You start by determining the Air Traffic Control (ATC) agency that most likely handles the area you are in. There is constant talk on these frequencies when close to a major city. You will hear them talking to Delta and everybody else as well. **You must be ready to hit the PTT and speak when there is a lull or you will never get a word in. However, don't cut somebody else off (stepping on somebody as it is referred).** Sometimes choosing the frequency to call can be hit or miss but if you select the wrong frequency that agency will tell you who to contact. As an example, you may look at Foreflight and it will reflect 121.0

for KCNI. However, if you're heading to the Northeast you will want to call Atlanta Center at 133.1 If you call 121.0 while heading to the Northeast or East you may have a conversation such as follows.

You: Atlanta Approach, November 2332 Echo Request *(121.0 frequency)*

Atlanta Approach: November 2332 Echo go ahead with request

You: November 2332 Echo is 15 miles Northeast of Cherokee County en route to Toccoa, request flight following. *(Be ready for the squawk code for your transponder)*

Atlanta Approach: November 2332 Echo 15 miles NE of Cherokee County, contact Atlanta Center at 133.1.

You: Atlanta Center, November 2332 Echo Request *(133.1 frequency dialed in - now these guys are busy and they may not get to you right away. They may come back a few minutes later and ask who else was calling. That's your chance to chime in so be ready)*

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo go ahead with request

You: November 2332 Echo is 15 miles Northeast of Cherokee County en route to Toccoa, request flight following. *(Be ready for the squawk code for your transponder)*

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo squawk 5232 and ident. *(You'll need to put the frequency into the transponder and hit the ident button)*

You: Squawk 5232 and ident, November 2332 Echo. *(every instruction needs to be read back immediately – no delays as they are very, very busy)*

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo, radar contact, 17 miles NE of Cherokee county, the Gainesville Altimeter 30.12

You: 30.12 November 2332 Echo *(set your altimeter to this setting at that time)*

Now the trick is to listen closely as you fly along. They will be calling out instructions to a million others but you have to pick out your call sign from it all. Listen for November to start. If you hear NOVEMBER then your ears should immediately be ready for the rest of your call sign (tail number). There 3 things that you will normally receive from ATC.

1. Traffic. ATC will call out traffic that is nearing your position such as the following.

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo, traffic, 11 o'clock 5 miles, a C130 at 5,000

You: We're looking, November 2332 Echo

If after a few moments you can't find the plane your response should be.

You: Atlanta, November 2332E, no joy on traffic.

Atlanta Center: Traffic no factor *(traffic has passed or is no longer a threat)*

Or

Traffic now 2 miles, same altitude, recommend turn 20 degrees left.

Keep in mind that they could give you another report of where the traffic is at. You are VFR so you decide when to turn. If you need to maneuver to avoid traffic DO IT don't wait for ATC's recommendation.

If you spot the traffic you do not need to tell ATC unless they told you report traffic in sight.

2. Change of Frequency: Each controlling agency has responsibility for aircraft in their sector. When you reach the edge of their sector they will pass you off to the next controlling agency.

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo, contact Atlanta Center, 132.4

This may seem confusing because they are telling you to call Atlanta Center when you are talking to Atlanta Center? They cover a lot of areas and it may be a controller sitting right next to the controller you're talking to but it's irrelevant. It's his rice bowl so call him up. They could have told you to contact Atlanta Approach or Greer Approach or Augusta Approach. Just go with the flow, note the agency and freq and make it happen.

You: Atlanta Center, 132.4, November 2332 Echo

Now put in the new frequency and flip it to active.

You: Atlanta Center, November 2332 Echo with you level 5,500

If you're climbing tell them your altitude and your target altitude. (Atlanta Center, November 2332 Echo, 2,500 for 5,500)

3. Termination: If ATC's workload gets too heavy they may tell you radar services are terminated. They will definitely tell you this when nearing the airport. Remember though, ATC is your friend and they are there to help. If you are having problems finding the airport tell them so. Examples of each follow:

Terminated due to workload

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo, radar services unavailable, squawk VFR, good day.

You: Radar services terminated, squawk VFR, November 2332 Echo

Terminated due to approaching the airport

Atlanta Center: November 2332 Echo, Toccoa 15 miles at 12 o'clock. Radar services terminated, squawk VFR.

You: Radar services terminated, squawk VFR, November 2332 Echo

You would now push the VFR button on the transponder or if not equipped with such you would tune in 1200. Now flip to the CTAF for the airport.

Finally, even though you are a VFR pilot, it is courteous for you to let ATC know when you're changing altitude or heading. As an example.

You: Atlanta Center, November 2332 Echo beginning our descent.

Or

You: Atlanta Center, November 2332 Echo climbing to 7500