

## Tips on Filing Successful IFR Flight Plans

### General

Instrument flight plans (IFR) that are filed through DUATS will be submitted to the ATC controlling the departure. Pilots should file complete IFR flight plans at least 30 minutes prior to their estimated time of departure to preclude any possible delay in receiving a departure clearance from ATC. In order to allow FAA traffic management time to implement strategic route planning, nonscheduled operators conducting IFR operations above FL 230 are requested to voluntarily file IFR flight plans at least four hours prior to estimated time of departure (ETD).

It is recommended that pilots file the maximum transponder or navigation capability of their aircraft in the equipment suffix. This will provide ATC with the necessary information to utilize all facets of navigational equipment and transponder capabilities available.

### Filing Using Airways and Jet Routes

It is vitally important that the route of flight be accurately and completely described via airways or jet routes established for use at the altitude or flight level planned.

If flight is to be conducted via designated airways or jet routes, describe the route using airways and fixes along the requested route. Reporting points may be identified by using authorized name/code as depicted on appropriate aeronautical charts.

**Transition between two airways-**The route of flight may be described by naming the reporting points or NAVAIDs over which the flight will pass, provided the points named are established for use at the altitude or flight level planned. For example:  
BW1 V44 SWANN V433 DQO

**Unnamed Intersections-** DynCorp DUATS will accept routes with unnamed intersections, however some of the routes may not be accepted by the ATCs and will result in FRC readback. To prevent this from occurring, follow this rule: If an airway transition is made

at an unnamed intersection, show the next succeeding NAVAID or named intersection on the airway you are intersecting, followed by repeating the airway and the complete route from that point. In the following example, V501 has an unnamed intersection with V276:  
HGR V501 V276 TON V276 CIP

**Shared points by airways-** When filing routes using airways that share more than one transition fix, select one and enter it between the two routes. In the following examples both BUMPY and ENO are shared by J37 and J14:

ALB J37 BUMPY J14 BHM

ALB J37 ENO J14 BHM

**Combination with airways and the navigational aids-** When the route of flight is defined by named reporting points, whether alone or in combination with airways, and the navigational aids (VOR, VORTAC, TACAN, NDB) to be used for the flight are a combination of different types of aids, enough information should be included to clearly indicate the route requested. For example:

LAX J5 LKV J3 GEG YXC FL 330  
J500 VLR J515 YWG

### Direct Flights

DUATS accepts direct flight plans filed from departure to destination without any route elements, but in most cases, the Center will amend these flights resulting in FRC readback. Please review the following to insure that you have defined your route adequately:

Any or all portions of the route that will not be flown on radials or courses of established airways or routes, such as

direct route flights, must be defined by indicating the radio fixes over which the flight will pass. Fixes selected to define the route shall be those over which the position of the aircraft can be accurately determined. Such fixes automatically become compulsory reporting points for the flight, unless advised otherwise by ATC.

Increasing use of self-contained airborne navigational systems, which do not rely on the VOR/VORTAC/TACAN system, have resulted in pilot requests for direct routes that exceed NAVAID service volume limits. These direct route requests will be approved only in a radar environment, with approval based on pilot responsibility for navigation on the authorized direct route.

The azimuth feature of VOR aids and the azimuth and distance (DME) features of VORTAC and TACAN aids are assigned certain frequency protected areas of airspace "class limits" or "categories," which are intended for application to established airway and route use, and to provide guidance for planning flights outside of established airways or routes. Use of such aids for defining a direct route of flight in controlled airspace should not exceed the following:

(a) Operations above FL 450 - Use aids not more than 200 NM apart. These aids are depicted on enroute high altitude charts.

(b) Operation off established routes from 18,000 feet MSL to FL 450 - Use aids not more than 260 NM apart. These aids are depicted on enroute high altitude charts.

*Please retain your DUATS Newsletters for future reference.*

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(c) Operation off established airways below 18,000 feet MSL - Use aids not more than 80 NM apart. These aids are depicted on enroute low altitude charts.

(d) Operation off established airways between 14,500 feet MSL and 17,999 feet MSL in the conterminous U.S. - enroute high facilities not more than 200 NM apart may be used.

At times, ATC will initiate a direct route in a radar environment that exceeds NAVAID service volume limits. In such cases ATC will provide radar monitoring and navigational assistance as necessary. Airway or jet route numbers, appropriate to the stratum in which operation will be conducted, may also be included to describe portions of the route to be flown. Example- MDW V262 BDF V10 BRL STJ SLN GCK

**NOTE-**

*When route of flight is described by radio fixes, the pilot will be expected to fly a direct course between the points named.*

Pilots are reminded that they are responsible for adhering to obstruction clearance requirements on those segments of direct routes that are outside of controlled airspace. The MEA's and other altitudes shown on low altitude IFR enroute charts pertain to those route segments within controlled airspace, and those altitudes may not meet obstruction clearance criteria when operating off those routes.

### Area Navigation (RNAV) Below 390

Random RNAV routes can only be approved in a radar environment. Factors that will be considered by ATC in approving random RNAV routes include the capability to provide radar monitoring and compatibility with traffic volume and flow. ATC will radar monitor each flight; however, navigation on the random RNAV route is the responsibility of the pilot.

To be certified for use in the National Airspace System, RNAV equipment must meet the specifications outlined in AC 90-45. The pilot is responsible for variations in equipment capability and must advise ATC if a RNAV clearance cannot be accepted as specified.

Pilots of aircraft equipped with operational area navigation equipment may file for random RNAV routes throughout the National Airspace System, where radar monitoring by ATC is available, in accordance with the following procedures:

(a) File airport-to-airport flight plans prior to departure.

(b) File the appropriate RNAV capability certification suffix in the flight plan.

(c) Plan the random route portion of the flight plan to begin and end over appropriate arrival and departure transition fixes or appropriate navigation aids for

the altitude stratum within which the flight will be conducted. The use of normal preferred departure and arrival routes (DP/STAR), where established, is recommended.

(d) File route structure transitions to and from the random route portion of the flight.

(e) Define the random route by waypoints. File route description waypoints by using degree-distance fixes based on navigational aids that are appropriate for the altitude stratum.

(f) File a minimum of one route description waypoint for each ARTCC through whose area the random route will be flown. These waypoints must be located within 200 NM of the preceding center's boundary.

(g) File an additional route description waypoint for each turnpoint in the route.

(h) Plan additional route description waypoints as required to ensure accurate navigation via the filed route of flight. Navigation is the pilot's responsibility unless ATC assistance is requested.

(i) Plan the route of flight so as to avoid prohibited and restricted airspace by 3 NM unless permission has been obtained to operate in that airspace and the appropriate ATC facilities are advised.

### RNAV At and Above 390

Pilots of aircraft equipped with latitude/longitude coordinate navigation capability, independent of VOR/TACAN references, may file for random RNAV routes at and above FL 390 within the conterminous U.S. using the following procedures:

(a) File airport-to-airport flight plans prior to departure.

(b) File the appropriate RNAV capability certification suffix in the flight plan.

(c) Plan the random route portion of the flight to begin and end over published departure/arrival transition fixes or appropriate navigation aids for airports without published transition procedures. The use of preferred departure and arrival routes, such as DP and STAR where established, is recommended.

(d) Plan the route of flight so as to avoid prohibited and restricted airspace by 3 NM unless permission has been obtained to operate in that airspace and the appropriate ATC facility is advised.

(e) Define the route of flight after the departure fix, including each intermediate fix (turnpoint) and the arrival fix for the destination airport in terms of latitude/longitude coordinates plotted to the nearest minute. The arrival fix must be identified by both the latitude/longitude coordinates and a fix identifier. The following example is for a route from MIA to LAX:

SRQ<sup>1</sup> 3407/10615<sup>2</sup> 3407/11546 TNP<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Departure fix.

<sup>2</sup> Intermediate fix (turning point).

<sup>3</sup> Arrival fix.

(f) Record latitude/longitude coordinates by four figures describing latitude in degrees and minutes followed by a slash and five figures describing longitude in degrees and minutes.

(g) File at FL 390 or above for the random RNAV portion of the flight.

(h) Fly all routes/route segments on Great Circle tracks.

### Proposed Departure Time Notes

To prevent saturation in the FAA computers, each center has parameters to delete proposed departure flight plans that have not been activated. Most centers have this parameter set to delete these flight plans a minimum of one hour after the proposed departure time. To ensure that a flight plan remains active, pilots whose actual departure time will be delayed one hour or more beyond their filed departure time, are requested to notify ATC of their departure time.

### Canceling IFR Flight Plan

a. An IFR flight plan may be canceled at any time the flight is operating in VFR conditions outside Class A airspace by pilots stating "CANCEL MY IFR FLIGHT PLAN" to the controller or air/ground station with which they are communicating. Immediately after canceling an IFR flight plan, a pilot should take the necessary action to change to the appropriate air/ground frequency, VFR radar beacon code and VFR altitude or flight level. ATC separation and information services will be discontinued, including radar services (where applicable). Consequently, if the canceling flight desires VFR radar advisory service, the pilot must specifically request it.

**NOTE-**

*Pilots must be aware that other procedures may be applicable to a flight that cancels an IFR flight plan within an area where a special program, such as a designated TRSA, Class C airspace, or Class B airspace, has been established.*

If a DVFR flight plan requirement exists, the pilot is responsible for filing this flight plan to replace the canceled IFR flight plan.

b. If operating on an IFR flight plan to an airport with a functioning control tower, the flight plan is automatically closed upon landing.

c. If operating on an IFR flight plan to an airport where there is no functioning control tower, the pilot must initiate cancellation of the IFR flight plan. This can be done by any FSS or, weather permitting, while still airborne and in communication with ATC in accordance with paragraph a. above.