



National Air Traffic Services Ltd
Aeronautical Information Service
Control Tower Building, London Heathrow Airport
Hounslow, Middlesex TW6 1JJ
Editorial: 020-8745 3458
Distribution: 0870-8871410 (Documedia Solutions Ltd)
Content: 01293-573370 (SRG/ATSSD)
Web site: www.ais.org.uk

FLIGHT INFORMATION SERVICE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Circular describes the provision of the Flight Information Service (FIS) in the United Kingdom.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Circular is to raise awareness amongst pilots of the services that constitute the FIS and of the variations that can exist between Air Traffic Service Units that may provide a FIS.
- 1.3 A FIS may only be provided by an Air Traffic Controller or Flight Information Service Officer (FISO).

2 Availability of FIS

- 2.1 A FIS is a non-radar service provided, either separately or in conjunction with other services, for the purposes of supplying information useful for the safe and efficient conduct of flights.
- 2.2 All flights in communication with an Air Traffic Service Unit (ATSU) will be provided with an Alerting Service⁽¹⁾ and a Flight Information Service.

2.3 The callsign of the ATSU indicates the type of service being provided by the Unit. Units using callsigns with the suffix CONTROL, TOWER, GROUND, APPROACH or RADAR provide an Air Traffic Control Service in addition to the FIS and Alerting Service. Units using callsigns with the suffix INFORMATION are providing FIS and Alerting Services only.

Note: Radio stations using callsigns with the suffix RADIO are providing an Air/Ground Communication Service and cannot be assumed to provide a FIS or Alerting Service.

- 2.4 A FIS provided by an aerodrome FIS Unit will normally provide information to enable the safe and efficient conduct of flights in the Aerodrome Traffic Zone. From the information received, pilots decide the appropriate course of action to be taken to ensure the safety of the flight.
- 2.5 A FIS provided by an ATC Unit located at an aerodrome will also provide information to enable the safe and efficient conduct of flights in the Aerodrome Traffic Zone and other airspace in the vicinity of the aerodrome. In addition to the FIS, such an ATSU will provide control services to certain aircraft or within certain portions of airspace. It is important for both an Air Traffic Controller and pilot to understand what service is being provided; the Air Traffic Controller will normally state the level of service that he or she is providing shortly after the initial contact from the pilot.
- 2.6 A FIS provided by an Area Control Centre (ACC) will provide information to enable the safe and efficient conduct of flights that are in the en-route phase of flight (usually this will be Class G airspace).
- 2.7 The hours of availability of the FIS provided by a particular ATSU are promulgated in the UK AIP.

3 Content of a FIS

- 3.1 In general, a FIS will include the following:
 - (a) Relevant meteorological information (eg weather reports for aerodromes, Regional Pressure Settings and SIGMET);
 - (b) relevant aerodrome information and serviceability status (eg availability of fuel or customs services, altimeter settings);
 - (c) relaying ATC messages in response to a request to enter controlled or advisory airspace;
 - (d) activation of Flight Plan as required;
 - (e) information about the serviceability of navigational aids and other facilities;
 - (f) information about changes of conditions at aerodromes including information on the state of the aerodrome movement areas when they are affected by snow, ice or significant depths of water;
 - (g) provision of miscellaneous information as requested by the pilot.

⁽¹⁾ An **Alerting Service** is provided to notify appropriate organisations regarding aircraft in need of search and rescue aid, and assist such organisations as required.

- 3.2 More specifically, a Flight Information Service provided at an aerodrome where no ATC Service is provided will also include:
- (a) Information about aircraft known to be flying in the Aerodrome Traffic Zone (ATZ) to assist pilots in preventing collisions;
 - (b) instructions and information to aircraft moving on the manoeuvring area to assist pilots in preventing collisions between aircraft and vehicles and obstructions on the manoeuvring area, or between aircraft moving on the apron;
 - (c) instructions to vehicles and persons on the manoeuvring area;
 - (d) essential aerodrome information.
- 3.3 More specifically, a Flight Information Service provided from an ACC will also include:
- (a) Any other information pertinent to safety, including general traffic information and information about other aircraft that have reported that they are operating in the same area. Such warnings may be limited by the accuracy and completeness of the information available and may be subject to the Controller or FISO's workload;
 - (b) the receipt and filing of Airborne Flight Plans;
 - (c) in certain cases, a Danger Area Crossing Service (DACS) and/or information on Danger/Restricted Area activity status (DAAIS).

4 Limitations of a FIS

- 4.1 The information provided by FIS may not be complete (and can only include information known to the ATSU providing the service).
- 4.2 Many items of information described in paragraph 3 will not be provided routinely and must be requested by the pilot.
- 4.3 As with all Air Traffic Services, at times of high workload or traffic density, the information provided may have to be prioritised and information that is considered non-essential may be omitted from messages.
- 4.4 An Air Traffic Controller or FISO may be required to monitor more than one frequency and there may, consequently, be some delay in response to a pilot's call.
- 4.5 The Air Traffic Controller or FISO will often be receiving and making telephone landline calls between ATS and other agencies in addition to responding to calls from pilots and, again, this may result in a delay to responding to calls.
- 4.6 A FIS provided from an ACC will cover a large area and the Air Traffic Controller or FISO is unlikely to be familiar with small geographical features or the names of smaller towns or villages. Reference to a notified Visual Reference Point (VRP), navigation aid, airfield or large urban conurbation is recommended when reporting position or intended routes. Pilots are recommended to make reference to features shown on the relevant 1:500,000 Aeronautical Chart.
- 4.7 Pilots should consider the availability of alternative Air Traffic Services or ATSUs that might be available to their flight. In many cases a FIS provided by an ACC may be unable to provide the same level of detail in the information provided as that provided by the ATSU at an aerodrome. Pilots should also consider whether a Lower Airspace Radar Service (LARS) may be available for part or all of their flight.
- 4.8 Pilots receiving a FIS are reminded that they remain responsible for conducting their flights safely and for complying with all relevant rules and regulations. In particular, it should be noted that if a clearance to enter a portion of airspace is required, the pilot is responsible for obtaining a clearance before entering the airspace although the Air Traffic Controller or FISO providing the FIS may be able to assist the pilot if requested. Similarly, whilst the Air Traffic Controller or FISO will endeavour to provide pilots with information about other flights that are known to be in the vicinity, the pilot must keep a good look-out for other traffic.

5 Summary

- 5.1 FIS provides information to assist pilots to conduct their flights safely. Except when an aircraft is on the ground at an aerodrome at which a FIS is provided (and where no ATC Service is provided), no instructions are provided by a FIS. Pilots are responsible for making decisions based on the information provided.
- 5.2 Some items of information will only be provided on request.
- 5.3 A FIS can be provided by many ATSUs within the same area. Pilots should consider which ATSU will be able to provide the most useful FIS for their flights.
- 5.4 Pilots should bear in mind that an Air Traffic Controller that is providing them with a FIS may also be providing ATC Services to other aircraft on the same frequency. Irrespective of the services or instructions that the Controller may be issuing to other aircraft, the pilot of an aircraft receiving a FIS will only be provided with information to assist them to conduct their flight safely. Pilots receiving a FIS from an ATC Unit may be able to request a LARS or ATC Service depending on the class of airspace and the privileges associated with their pilot licence and ratings. The receipt of a LARS or ATC Service may provide additional information or instructions to assist the pilot. A LARS or ATC Service will only be available if the controller's workload will permit the service to be provided safely.

This Circular is issued for information, guidance and necessary action.