

Safety Bulletin

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Sydney Surface Movement Radiotelephony (RTF) Congestion

The Sydney Surface Movement Control frequencies are extremely busy with high levels of traffic, particularly in the vicinity of the domestic aprons on frequency 121.7 MHz.

The RTF impacting on Sydney Ground frequencies are not only aircraft movements. They also include repositioning aircraft under tow, ARFF tenders and airport vehicular traffic.

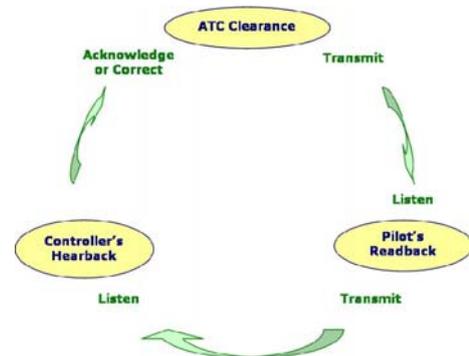
There have been several safety occurrences which have identified communication issues as contributory factors. An investigation into one of these occurrences highlighted the level of frequency congestion that exists, with a 21 minute period on 121.7MHz where there was less than a 10 second break in transmissions.

These safety occurrences have also highlighted that incorrect readbacks, missed readbacks, over transmissions and incorrect recipients acknowledging instructions all contribute to frequency congestion.

While there is not much that can be done by pilots and airside drivers to reduce the amount of traffic operating in the Sydney area, good radio etiquette can help reduce confusion and delays, and improve the overall level of safety.

The diagram shows, in simplified terms, the Pilot/Controller Communication loop. This loop can have many barriers introduced which affect the flow and understanding of the information. These barriers include:

- Pilot/Controller workload
- Equipment limitations
- Similar sounding callsigns
- Fatigue
- Expectation bias
- Distractions
- Pressure



To assist in closing the communication loop, there are a range of considerations for all parties including:

- Use standard phraseology whenever possible to prevent misunderstandings
- Keep transmissions clear and concise
- Know what you want to say before transmitting
- Always listen out before broadcasting
- Don't transmit if another aircraft is about to transmit a readback or awaiting a reply from the controller after a clearance request.

- Speak up if you think there is any possibility that a transmission has been directed to or answered by the wrong station
- Always read back ATC clearances as detailed in **AIP GEN 3.4-12 4.4**
- If in doubt about an ATC instruction, ask the controller to confirm the clearance rather than saying what you thought you heard.

For more information

For further information please contact Airservices Safety Liaison:

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