

Safety Bulletin

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The importance of correct radio calls and readbacks

One of the most critical interfaces between pilots and air traffic controllers is the use of correct radio calls and readbacks. Most standard radio transmissions and readbacks are in a format that enables both the pilot and the air traffic controller to relay required information efficiently and effectively. However, the use of non-standard radio calls or readbacks affects the ability of air traffic control (ATC) to understand your intentions and confirm that you have understood your clearance. If your readback is incorrect or incomplete, ATC will need to confirm your understanding; leading to additional conversation, complexity, workload and frequency congestion. This may also impact you or other aircraft by increasing the chances of incorrect information being passed or received.

In addition to the ongoing risks associated with incorrect or incomplete readbacks across the wider aviation community, aerodrome controllers are noticing a tendency amongst pilots at Class C aerodromes to inaccurately read back the clearance issued in relation to take-off and landing.

Take-off clearance

AIP GEN 3.4 – 53 states that at locations where there are multiple runway operations, other than Class D aerodromes where aircraft are operating on parallel runways using discrete frequencies, the phraseology for the take-off clearance is:

- **ATC:** (callsign) RUNWAY (number) CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF.

The correct response is:

- **PILOT:** RUNWAY (number) CLEARED FOR TAKE-OFF (Callsign).

Landing clearance

AIP GEN 3.4 – 61 states that at locations where there are multiple runway operations, other than Class D aerodromes where aircraft are operating on parallel runways using discrete frequencies, the phraseology for the landing clearance is:

- **ATC:** (Callsign) RUNWAY (number) CLEARED TO LAND (or TOUCH AND GO) (or STOP AND GO).

The correct response from the pilot is:

- **PILOT:** RUNWAY (number) CLEARED TO LAND (Callsign).

When an incorrect readback occurs, the aerodrome controller is required to go back to the pilot to obtain a correct readback. This takes valuable time and has caused delays, cancellation of clearance or missed take-off or landing opportunities.

General readback requirements

AIP GEN 3.4 -12 details pilot radio call and readback requirements. The following components of an ATC transmission require accurate readback:

1. an ATC route clearance in its entirety, and any amendments
2. en route holding instructions
3. any route and holding point specified in a taxi clearance
4. any clearances, conditional clearances or instructions to hold short of, enter, land on, line-up on, wait, take-off from, cross, taxi or backtrack on any runway
5. any approach clearance
6. assigned runway, altimeter settings directed to specific aircraft, radio and radio navigation aid frequency instructions
7. SSR codes, data link logon codes
8. level instructions, direction of turn, heading and speed instructions.

Further information

For further information on this Safety Bulletin, please contact Airservices Safety Liaison Safety.Liaison@airservicesaustralia.com