Standard Operating Procedures

Procedures applicable to all positions, except where superseded by local operating procedures.

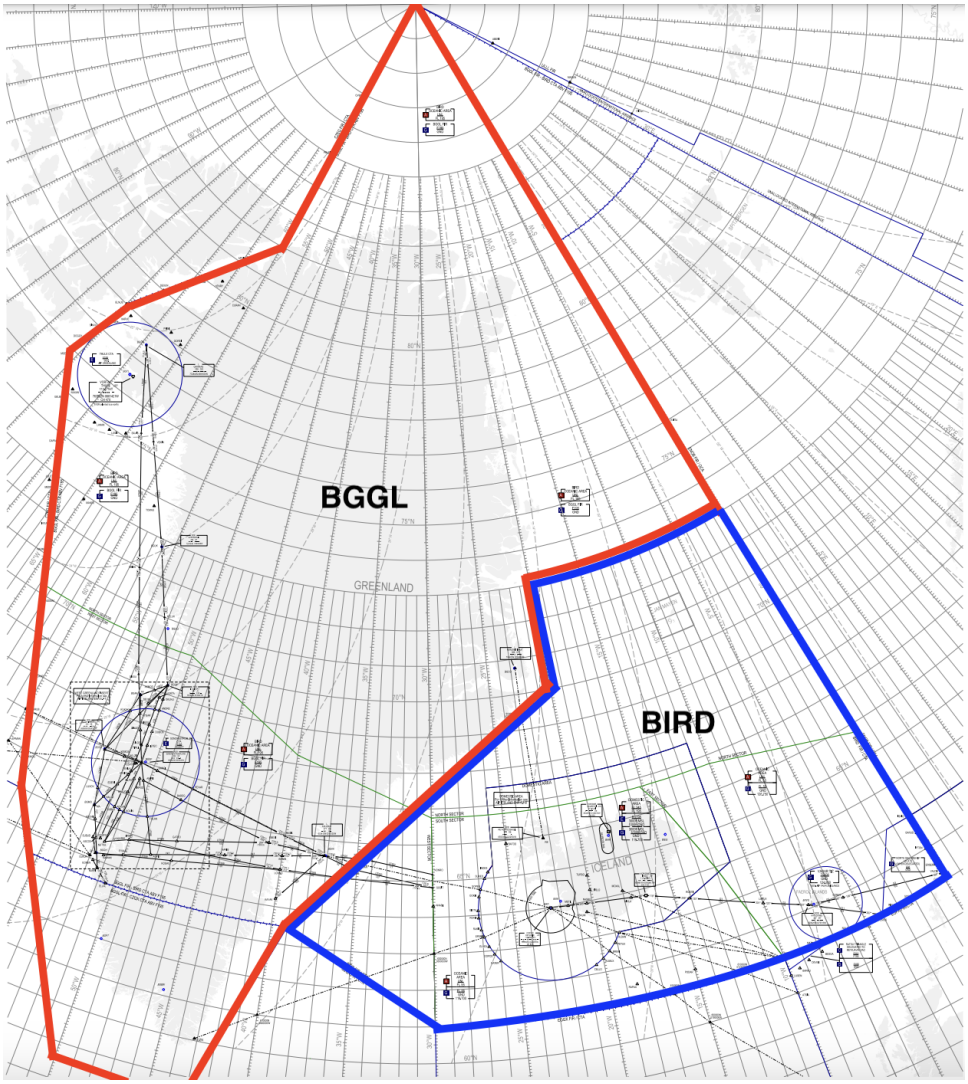
- General
- Delivery
- Ground
- Tower
- Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS)
- ATS Surveillance (APP & Area Control)
- Oceanic Area Control
- VATSIM Logon Procedures

General

Introduction to the Reykjavik CTA

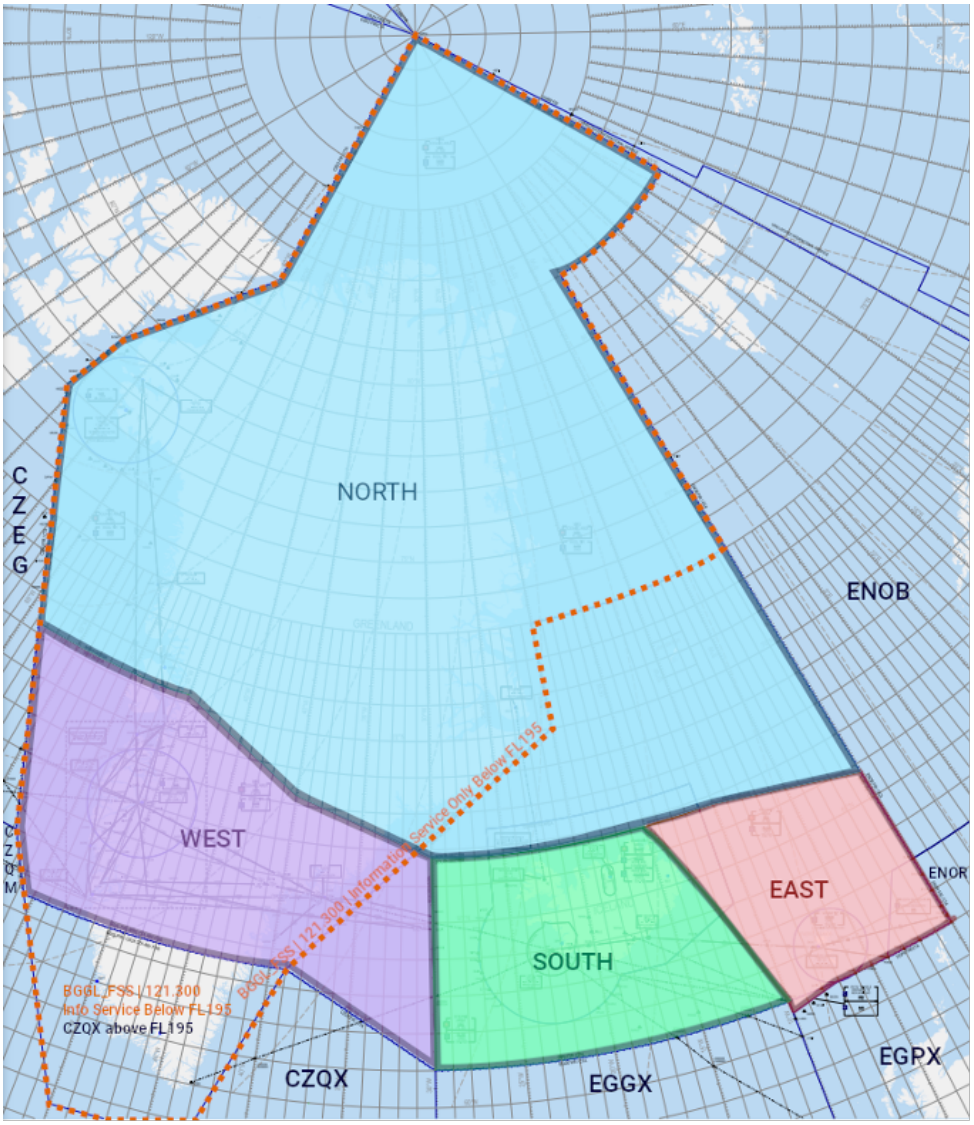
The **Reykjavik Control Area (CTA),** the controlled airspace that Iceland is responsible for, is unique in that it overlaps three territories (Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands) and two FIRs.

The following image depicts the two FIRs within the Reykjavik CTA – Reykjavik (BIRD) and Nuuk (BGGL).



At present, Greenland delegates its enroute air traffic services to Iceland (as well as Canada.) Hence, the Reykjavik CTA consists not just of BIRD FIR, but also of the central and northern parts of BGGL FIR above FL195.

The CTA is divided into four sectors – North, South, East, and West. These sectors *do not* follow the FIR boundaries of BIRD or BGGL FIR.



The South sector overlies Iceland. The North sector overlies northern Greenland. The East sector overlies the Faroe Islands, and the West sector overlies central Greenland.

> BGGL FIR is only delegated to the Reykjavik CTA **above FL195.** Below FL195, Nuuk Information provides flight information service in BGGL FIR.

Airspace Classification

Out of the seven airspace categories defined by ICAO, the Reykjavik CTA uses five: A, C, D, E, and G.

Class	Separation Provided	Service Provided	Speed Limit	Radio Communication Requirement	Subject to ATC Clearance
A	IFR from IFR	IFR: Air traffic control service – VFR: ***NOT PERMITTED***	N/A	Continuous two-way	Yes
C	IFR from IFR & VFR – VFR from IFR	IFR: Air traffic control service – VFR: Traffic information, and traffic avoidance advice upon request	250KT IAS below FL100	Continuous two-way	Yes
D	IFR from IFR – VFR: N/A	IFR: Air traffic control service including traffic information about VFR flights (and traffic avoidance advice on request) – VFR: IFR/VFR and VFR/VFR traffic information (and traffic avoidance advice on request)	250KT IAS below FL100	Continuous two-way	Yes
E	IFR from IFR – VFR: N/A	Air traffic control service and traffic information about VFR flights as far as practical – Traffic information as far as practical	250KT IAS below FL100	IFR: Continuous two-way – VFR: No	IFR: Yes – VFR: No
G	N/A	Uncontrolled; flight information service	250KT IAS below FL100	IFR: Continuous two-way – VFR: No	No

Classes B and F are not used in the Reykjavik CTA.

Most TMAs in the Reykjavik CTA are Class D (the Faxi TMA also has some Class A and C airspace.) All CTRs are Class D. FIZs and ATZs are Class G, but are also radio mandatory zones, meaning pilots must be in contact with the local AFIS unit.

Outside of TMAs, CTRs, and ATZ/FIZs, the Reykjavik CTA is:

- Class A above FL195.
- Class A above FL55 within the Reykjavik Oceanic Area (OCA).
- Class E within the lower portion of the Icelandic Domestic Area (3000ft – FL195.) (Note: the upper portion of the Domestic Area, from FL195-FL245, is Class A, as detailed above.)
- Class G below FL55 in the OCA, below 3000ft in the Icelandic Domestic Area, and below FL195 in Nuuk (BGGL) FIR.

Transponder Equipment

All IFR flights in the Reykjavik CTA must have a pressure-altitude reporting SSR (i.e., Mode A+C) transponder.

All aircraft within the Faxi TMA must have an SSR (i.e., Mode A) transponder.

Aircraft operating on transponder codes assigned by Reykjavik Control must keep those codes set throughout the Reykjavik OCA unless otherwise advised by ATC.

(Iceland Only) Abbreviating Local Registrations in R/T

When controlling Icelandic (BIxx) positions, in radio communications, controllers shall abbreviate *local* (Icelandic, with the TF- prefix) registrations as follows:

- On first contact, ATC shall **always omit the TF prefix.**
  - E.g., the registration TF-ICE should always be spoken as “India Charlie Echo.”
- For further communications, ATC may choose to further abbreviate the callsign to its last two letters only.

- E.g., TF-ISN, normally spoken as “India Sierra November,” may be abbreviated further to “Sierra November."

> This is different from the standard ICAO convention for callsign abbreviation, which is detailed below.

For *foreign* (non-Icelandic) registrations, controllers shall use the standard ICAO convention for abbreviating registrations in radio communications. I.e.,

- On first contact, ATC must **always use the full registration.**
  - E.g., G-ABCD must be read out as “Golf Alpha Bravo Charlie Delta.”
- For further communications, ATC may abbreviate the callsign to its first letter + last two letters.
  - E.g., G-ABCD may be abbreviated to “Golf Charlie Delta.”

> **The above is not applicable to Greenlandic and Faroese positions.** When controlling such positions, controllers shall continue to use the standard ICAO convention for callsign abbreviation for all registrations, local and foreign.

Delivery

When performing clearance delivery, DEL must always check the following elements of an aircraft's flight plan:

- SID/departure instructions
- Flight plan route
- Initial climb (Cleared Flight Level / CFL)
- Cruising level (Requested Flight Level / RFL)
- Squawk code

> As of 20th March 2024, all departing aircraft shall receive a **standard IFR clearance**; no oceanic clearances are to be issued.

SID/Departure Instructions

The vast majority of aircraft will depart a controlled aerodrome on a SID (Standard Instrument Departure), a published procedure starting from the aerodrome (generally specific to a runway) leading to the first enroute waypoint of the aircraft.

DEL should verify that Euroscope has assigned the flight a valid SID — i.e., valid for the active departure runway, connects to the aircraft’s flight plan route, and is appropriate for the aircraft’s performance characteristics.

If Euroscope has assigned an invalid SID, then DEL should manually assign a valid SID on the Departure List.

Non-Standard Departures

Occasionally, an aircraft may be unable to accept an assigned SID. Reasons may include having an out-of-date AIRAC, lack of navigation equipment (e.g., non-RNAV), performance constraints (unable to meet minimum altitudes or climb gradients), etc.

In this case, DEL should coordinate with the overlying Approach (APP) unit. APP will issue non-standard departure instructions which DEL shall then relay to the aircraft,

such as:

- A **radar vectored** departure (fly heading XXX, or climb straight ahead to XXX ft.)
- **Direct** to the first flight plan waypoint.
- **Visual climb** (aircraft climb visually to their first flight plan waypoint; a left or a right turn may be specified on departure.)

Flight Planned Route

Iceland & the Faroe Islands

BIRD FIR is Free Route Airspace (FRA), meaning that aircraft departing Iceland (as well as the Faroe Islands, which underlies BIRD FIR) are generally free to determine their own routings.

However, aircraft may still be subject to certain rules and restrictions to their routing. For example, departures from BIKF and BIRK are not permitted to use the G3 airway, except if they have short-range navigational equipment only. These restrictions are described in LOPs where relevant, and may be found in the Iceland AIP, ENR 1.8.3.1.3.7.

Greenland

BGGL FIR is **not** Free Route Airspace.

A "domestic" airways system has been established in BGGL FIR from FL285 and below. Details on the airways may be found in the Greenland AIP, ENR 3 (ATS Routes.) Generally, flights below FL285 are expected to fly via these airways. For flights above FL285, the rules of BIRD FIR apply.

Initial Climb (CFL)

The standard initial climb from all Icelandic airports is **FL290,** or the aircraft's requested flight level (RFL) if lower.

Initial climb for departures from EKVG and Greenland (BG**) is at the discretion of Reykjavik Control. Traffic permitting, Reykjavik may clear the aircraft to climb directly to RFL.

DEL should verify that the initial climb is set correctly on Euroscope on the CFL (Cleared Flight Level) list item.

Cruising Flight Level (RFL)

DEL should verify that the aircraft's Requested Flight Level (RFL), i.e. its cruising level, is valid.

In the Reykjavik CTA, IFR cruising levels are allocated following these rules:

- **2000ft – FL410:** Levels are separated by 1000ft, and allocated following the East/West semi-circular rule.
  - I.e., flights with an Eastbound track (000-179°) fly at odd thousands of feet, and flights with a Westbound track (180-359°) fly at even thousands of feet.
  - *Technically, between FL290-FL410, this is subject to RVSM approval. However, on VATSIM, we assume that any aircraft requesting to fly in RVSM airspace is RVSM approved.*
- **Above FL410:** Levels are separated by 2000ft. E.g., FL410 Eastbound, FL430 Westbound, FL450 Eastbound, etc.

Squawk Code

After DEL has checked all of the above elements of the flight plan, DEL should assign the aircraft a discrete four-digit squawk code (aka SSR, or secondary surveillance radar, code) via TopSky.

Clearance Format/Phraseology

[CALLSIGN]**, cleared to **[DEST]** via **[SID]**, climb via SID **[CFL]**, **[SQUAWK].

E.g.,

> ICE123, cleared to London Heathrow, via the LUTER 2A departure, climb via SID FL290, squawk 4110.

Reroutes

It is generally assumed that unless stated otherwise, an aircraft is being cleared via its flight planned route. If there are any amendments to the routing, DEL shall state them after the SID. E.g.,

> FLI401, cleared to Vagar with a reroute, via the OSKUM 3A departure, after OSKUM direct MY, climb via SID FL290...

It is good practice to indicate that there will be a reroute using language such as "with a reroute" when issuing the clearance, to ensure the pilot is ready to copy.

For *partial* reroutings, DEL may use the phrase "flight planned route" to indicate where the original route would resume. E.g.,

> ICE123, cleared to London Heathrow with a reroute, via the OSKUM 3A departure, after OSKUM direct RATSU then flight planned route, climb via SID FL290...

If the rerouting is very long, DEL may provide the new routing via a separate transmission, before issuing the clearance itself, to reduce the length of each transmission. If the reroute was provided separately before the clearance, the clearance itself does not need to specify "with a reroute."

Non-Standard Departure Instructions

For aircraft which are not following a SID, then their departure instructions (as coordinated with APP) should be given following the phrase “after departure runway XX...” E.g.,

> ICE236, cleared to Akureyri, after departure runway 01 fly heading 040, initial climb 5000ft, squawk 1217.

Since the aircraft is not following a SID, the initial climb may be issued simply as “initial climb" (or simply "climb" if the aircraft will climb all the way to cruise.)

Whenever an aircraft is maintaining the runway heading/track after departure, the instruction "climb straight ahead to [LEVEL]" may be used to serve as both the departure instruction & the initial climb.

After Issuing Clearance

Upon the pilot's correct readback, they should be instructed to report ready for push & start on the **delivery frequency.** Only when the aircraft is ready should they be transferred to GND. This is to ensure they are on frequency, should DEL have to re-clear them.

If a VFR departure calls DEL, DEL shall instruct them to contact GND. DEL does **not** issue VFR clearances.

Ground

Pushback & Startup

In the Reykjavik CTA, all aircraft require clearance for startup, except for single-engine fixed-wing aircraft, and aircraft at uncontrolled aprons (as described in LOPs, e.g., Fluggardar at BIRK.) Single-engine fixed-wing aircraft may start up without ATC approval.

- Startup clearance may generally be issued upon request, except (for IFR departures) if flow control measures are in force. See the Flow Control page for more information.

If an aircraft requires pushback as well from its stand, GND may issue the pushback & startup clearance together (i.e., “push and start clearance.”).

Aircraft must have their squawk code set and their transponder on **before** they may be cleared for pushback.

First Contact with VFR

Upon first contact with VFR aircraft, GND should assign them a discrete (i.e., unique) squawk code, provide them with the local QNH, and ask for their intentions.

> Some registrations and callsigns have allocated squawk codes in Iceland (i.e., those registrations/callsigns will *always* use that squawk code.) These are published in an AIC in the Iceland AIP, currently **AIC A 09/2023** (published Aug 2023.)
>
> The BIRD sector file is configured to assign these codes automatically, so ATC does not generally need to handle these aircraft differently than others.

GND should coordinate with TWR to inform them of the aircraft’s intentions. This must be done before the aircraft reaches the runway holding point, so that TWR may advise

if the pilot’s intentions cannot be accommodated due to airspace congestion in the CTR.

Taxi

Before taxiing, aircraft must be squawking their assigned code & their transponder must be on.

Taxi instructions should include the aircraft's taxi route and destination, as well as any necessary information or instructions to avoid obstacles or conflicting traffic (e.g., hold short, conditional instructions, etc.)

> “ICE123, taxi via N and E to holding point runway 01, cross runway 28, give way to the British Airways A320 on N.

If an aircraft will taxi through an apron as a part of its taxi, one may choose to include the apron in the taxi clearance, along with the cardinal direction that the pilot will be following. E.g., taxi southbound on the East Apron." This is not strictly necessary, but can improve the clarity of the taxi instructions.

Runway Crossing & Backtracking

TWR must approve all runway crossings, and GND communicates the crossing clearances to aircraft. I.e., aircraft remain on GND’s frequency during the crossing, even though the approval to cross comes from the TWR controller.

For **inactive** runways, TWR may issue a “blanket clearance” to GND to allow runway crossings on that runway without coordinating each individual aircraft with TWR. Any blanket clearance becomes automatically invalid if the runway in question becomes active, even if only for a one-off departure or arrival.

For **active** runways, GND shall always coordinate an individual clearance for each aircraft that must cross that runway. No blanket clearances may be granted.

If any aircraft must taxi on a runway for any reason, GND shall coordinate with TWR first, then transfer the aircraft to TWR when holding short of the runway.

Reaching the Holding Point

Once a departing aircraft is approaching the runway holding point for departure (or for taxiing/backtracking on a runway), GND should transfer the aircraft to TWR.

Tower

Determining the Active Runway

Controllers should determine the active runway based on the following factors:

1. **Winds** – Choosing the runway with the largest headwind component.
2. **Runway length/characteristics** – If the headwind component between two runways is similar, choosing the one which is longer, or which has an ILS, etc.
3. **Local procedures** (e.g., preferred runway for noise abatement, if one exists.)

Flexibility should also be granted where possible. Traffic permitting, one should make all reasonable efforts to accommodate any requests from pilots to use non-active runways.

Control Zone (CTR)

In addition to the runways, TWR is also responsible for the Control Zone (CTR), the airspace immediately surrounding their airport. This includes controlling VFR arrivals, departures, and aircraft in the circuit. See the VFR Guide for more information.

Takeoff Clearances

Takeoff clearances must not be issued unless all departing traffic ahead has crossed the end of the runway or begun a turn, and any arriving traffic ahead is clear of the runway. The only exception is if reduced runway separation minima (RRSM) is being applied; see below.

The takeoff clearance should include:

- Winds
- Departure runway

- *(Intersection departures only)* The runway intersection
- *(IFR departures only)* The next ATS unit which the aircraft will be contacting.
  - This may be omitted if one is covering TWR top-down.

For example:

> FNA102, when airborne contact Keflavik Approach on 119.300, winds 170 degrees 12 knots, runway 19 from S, cleared for takeoff.

For VFR departures, the takeoff clearance should include the flight's VFR clearance to join the circuit, VFR route, or leave the control zone. See the VFR Guide for examples.

Taxiing on the Runway

Any taxiing or backtracking on the runway shall be conducted on the TWR frequency. TWR shall transfer the aircraft back to GND once it is clear of the runway.

Departure Separation

Fixed-wing aircraft departing on the same route must have at least **5 NM** constant or increasing separation in trail. TWR and APP shall be jointly responsible for ensuring this.

Wake turbulence separation must be applied between departures when the second (trailing) aircraft is a lighter WTC than the first (preceding) aircraft, and they are using:

- The same runway
- Parallel runways separated by less than 760m (2500ft)
- Intersecting runways, if the projected flight path of the second aircraft will cross the projected flight path of the first aircraft at the same altitude or less than 300m (1000ft) below
- Parallel runways separated by 760m (2500ft) or more, if the projected flight path of the second aircraft will cross the projected flight path of the first aircraft at the same altitude or less than 300m (1000ft) below.

> At the time of writing, no airport under the Reykjavik CTA currently has parallel runways.

A minimum time separation shall be applied as follows:

MINIMUM TIME-BASED SEPARATION FOR DEPARTURES					
		First (Preceding) Aircraft			
		Light (L)	**Medium (M)**	**Heavy (H)**	**Super (J)**
Second (Trailing) Aircraft	**Light (L)**	—	2 min	2 min	3 min
	Medium (M)	—	—	2 min	3 min
	Heavy (H)	—	—	—	2 min
	Super (J)	—	—	—	—

One should further add **1 minute** to the wake turbulence separation time after any departures from an intermediate point. Touch-and-goes are considered to be departures from an intermediate point. E.g.,

- A Light departure behind a Heavy departure from an intersection requires 3 mins of separation.
- A Medium aircraft behind a Super aircraft doing a touch-and-go requires 4 mins of separation.

> To maximize efficient use of the runway, if two departures require either wake turbulence or route separation, TWR should utilize the delay time between the two aircraft to allow other aircraft not requiring separation to depart.

Landing Clearances

Landing clearances must not be issued unless all departing traffic ahead has crossed the end of the runway or begun a turn, and any arriving traffic ahead is clear of the runway. The only exception is if reduced runway separation minima (RRSM) is being applied; see below.

A landing clearance shall contain the current winds, the arrival runway, and the phrase “cleared to land.” For example:

> ICE403, winds 190 degrees 6 knots, runway 19, cleared to land.

If one previously gave an aircraft the winds & landing runway in a “continue approach” instruction, and neither have changed since then, one does not need to say them again in the landing clearance.

If TWR anticipates that the aircraft will be cleared to land less than 4 NM from the airport, TWR should tell the aircraft to “expect late landing clearance.”

Reduced Runway Separation Minima

Some aerodromes in Iceland allow the use of **reduced runway separation minima (RRSM)** in some limited circumstances.

> As of the time of writing, these procedures apply only to the following aerodromes: **BIKF, BIRK, BIAR.**

Aircraft Categories

For purposes of applying RRSM, aircraft are divided into three categories:

- **Category 1:** Single-engine propeller aircraft with a maximum certificated take-off mass of 2000kg or less.
  - *E.g., Cessna 172 (C172), Diamond DA-40 (DA40), etc.*
- **Category 2:** Single-engine propeller aircraft with a maximum certificated take-off mass of more than 2000kg but less than 7000kg; and twin-engine propeller aircraft with a maximum certificated take-off mass of less than 7000kg
  - *E.g., Cessna Caravan (C208), Diamond DA-42 (DA42), etc.*
- **Category 3:** All other aircraft.

> To find an aircraft's maximum certificated takeoff weight, as well as other useful performance characteristics, one may visit the **Eurocontrol Aircraft**

> **Performance Database** at
> contentzone.eurocontrol.int/aircraftperformance/default.aspx.

Conditions for RRSM

Reduced runway separation minima is subject to the following conditions:

- Must be within the hours of **daylight** (30 mins after local sunrise to 30 mins before local sunset.)
- Shall **not** apply between a departing aircraft and a preceding landing aircraft.
- **Wake turbulence separation** minima shall be applied.
- Visibility shall be at least **5km** and ceiling shall not be lower than **300m (1000ft.)**
- Tailwind component shall not exceed **5 KTS.**
- There shall be available means to assist the controller in assessing the distances between aircraft.
  - *For VATSIM purposes, it is acceptable to use the Euroscope-provided ground radar for this purpose.*
- **Minimum separation continues to exist** between two departing aircraft immediately after take-off of the second aircraft.
- **Traffic information** shall be provided to the flight crew of the succeeding aircraft concerned.
- The **Runway Condition Code** shall not be lower than **5** on any part of the runway.

Separation to Be Applied

> For VATSIM purposes, controllers may use the Euroscope "click and drag" vector tool to measure out the distances required below.
>
> As the Euroscope vector tool shows distances in nautical miles (NM), below are some helpful rough conversions of the distances listed below into NM:
>
> • 600m ≈ **0.5 NM**
> • 1500m ≈ **1 NM**
> • 2400m ≈ **1.5 NM**
>
> *(The above conversions have been rounded up to the nearest .5, for safety and ease of memorization.)*

Landing Aircraft

A succeeding landing Category **1** aircraft may cross the runway threshold when the preceding aircraft is a Category **1 or 2** aircraft which either:

- Has landed and has passed a point at least **600m** from the threshold of the runway, is in motion and will vacate the runway without backtracking; or
- Is airborne and has passed a point at least **600m** from the threshold of the runway.

A succeeding landing Category **2** aircraft may cross the runway threshold when the preceding aircraft is a Category **1 or 2** aircraft which either:

- Has landed and has passed a point at least **1500m** from the threshold of the runway, is in motion and will vacate the runway without backtracking; or
- Is airborne and has passed a point at least **1500m** from the threshold of the runway.

A succeeding landing aircraft may cross the runway threshold when a preceding Category **3** aircraft:

- Has landed and has passed a point at least **2400m** from the threshold of the runway, is in motion and will vacate the runway without backtracking; or
- Is airborne and has passed a point at least **2400m** from the threshold of the runway.

Departing Aircraft

- A Category **1** aircraft may be cleared for take-off when the preceding departing aircraft is a Category **1 or 2** aircraft which is airborne and has passed a point at least **600m** from the position of the succeeding aircraft
- A Category **2** aircraft may be cleared for take-off when the preceding departing aircraft is a Category **1 or 2** aircraft which is airborne and has passed a point at least **1500m** from the position of the succeeding aircraft; and
- An aircraft may be cleared for take-off when a preceding departing Category 3 aircraft is airborne and has passed a point at least **2400m** from the position of the succeeding aircraft.

> Consideration should be given to increased separation between highperformance single-engine aircraft and preceding Category 1 or 2 aircraft.

Go-Arounds & Missed Approaches

Go-arounds may be initiated by the pilot or ATC, if either one feels that the approach cannot be safely continued. TWR must instruct aircraft to go around if they will cross the runway threshold before the aircraft ahead is airborne or clear of the runway (the only exception is if RRSM is being applied, in which case see above.)

IFR go-arounds should generally be instructed to follow the standard missed approach. If an aircraft is flying a visual approach, or is unable to follow the standard missed approach, then they should be given instructions such as a heading or visual climb, as defined by LOPs.

VFR go-arounds may simply be instructed to (re)join the circuit. This may include making an early turn onto downwind, if necessary to avoid conflicts.

> **TWR must coordinate all IFR go-arounds with Approach (APP) <u>before</u> transferring the aircraft back to APP!** APP may tell TWR to relay de-conflicting instructions to the go-around aircraft, such as a heading or climb/stop climb, in order to avoid conflicts with airborne aircraft.

Maintaining the ATIS

At aerodromes with an ATIS, it is TWR’s responsibility to maintain the ATIS. If TWR is offline, then APP or area control units who are covering TWR top-down shall maintain the ATIS. Only if there are no overlying APP/area control units online should GND or DEL maintain the ATIS.

Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS)

Introduction to AFIS

Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS) is the provision of flight information service to aircraft in the vicinity of an aerodrome. This includes traffic information, weather information, aerodrome conditions, hazards & obstructions, and any other information which may be relevant to the safe navigation of a flight.

Generally, an AFIS unit will have either the callsign "Information" (in Iceland) or "AFIS" (in Greenland and EKVG.)

> There are two regulatory environments in which AFIS is provided beneath the Reykjavik CTA: **Iceland**, which is managed by Iceland's ANSP *Isavia*, and **Greenland/Faroe Islands** (abbreviated **"GLFI"** in this guide), which are managed by Denmark's ANSP *Naviair.*
>
> These two regulatory environments are similar, but have occasional differences. Where relevant, the procedures below will distinguish between Iceland and GLFI operating procedures.

> There are a lot of regulatory differences in the provision of AFIS across the various countries that provide it around the world. E.g., in some countries, AFIS does not direct *any* ground traffic or set an active runway, whereas they do in Iceland & GLFI (see below).
>
> The information in this guide is therefore not a *universal* guide to AFIS, but how it

is uniquely provisioned in Iceland & GLFI.

Area of Responsibility

Most AFIS aerodromes have an associated **FIZ** (Flight Information Zone – the term used in GLFI) or **ATZ** (Aerodrome Traffic Zone – the term used in Iceland.) Aircraft must be in two-way radio communication with the AFIS unit within the FIZ or ATZ.

Some Icelandic AFIS aerodromes do not have an ATZ. In such cases, aircraft must be in two-way radio communication with the AFIS unit when in the "vicinity of the aerodrome." This is defined as being within, entering, or leaving the traffic circuit.

Differences from Controlled Aerodromes (Summary)

NOTE: The following procedures have recently been revised, to reflect that AFIS units in *both* Iceland and Greenland have ground movement authority outside of runways.

AFIS is not air traffic control. AFIS units may not issue clearances or other instructions to airborne aircraft, or aircraft on runways. AFIS units may, however, provide some limited instructions to aircraft on the ground.

The table below briefly summarizes the key differences between controlled aerodromes and AFIS. For those unfamiliar with AFIS, keep reading — these differences will be discussed in more detail.

Controlled Aerodromes	AFIS
"Cleared to…"	**"Reykjavik Control clears you to…"** Clearance is not issued by AFIS but by an overlying ACC unit.

"Information [letter] is current/correct..."	**The same, at the few AFIS aerodromes with an ATIS** (e.g., BGGH.) **Most AFIS aerodromes do not have an ATIS.** In those cases, pilots should be offered the latest weather upon readback of their clearance, or first contact for VFR.
“Runway in use..."	**The same;** AFIS sets active runways.
“Startup approved” / “Push and start approved”	**The same.** Pilots must contact AFIS before startup, and AFIS may direct ground movements outside of runways.
“Taxi to... via...”	**Partially the same; AFIS may direct ground movements *outside* of runways.** AFIS may also refuse aircraft permission to enter runways (e.g., “hold short" or "remain clear of runway XX.”)
“Cleared for takeoff”	**“No reported traffic runway [XX]”** AFIS does not issue takeoff/landing clearances. AFIS only reports on the status of the runway and relevant traffic.
“Cleared to land”	
“Line up and wait”	**“Runway [XX] is occupied, traffic is...”** See above.
“Hold short runway [XX]” / “Hold position”	
“After departure leave the control zone...” *(VFR departure instructions)*	**No equivalent.** AFIS does not issue VFR clearances/instructions for airborne aircraft.

IFR Clearances

IFR aircraft request clearance via the local AFIS unit, following the steps below.

1. **The IFR aircraft requests clearance to the local AFIS unit, who shall then relay the clearance request to Reykjavik ACC.**
   - This can be done via any means of verbal coordination (e.g., Discord VC, VATSIM PMs, etc.)

- *For Iceland & the Faroe Islands:* The lowest sector of Reykjavik Control overlying the aerodrome shall issue the clearance.
- *For Greenland:*
  - Iceland Radio is first preference to issue the clearance.
  - If Iceland Radio is offline, and the airport underlies the West sector, then the lowest West sector controller of Reykjavik Control shall issue the clearance.
  - If the airport does not underlie the West sector, and Iceland Radio is offline, then no clearance shall be issued and the aircraft shall be instructed to depart at its discretion.

2. **Reykjavik ACC shall issue the clearance to the AFIS unit.**
   1. Clearances may be issued via a SID if available, in which case the aircraft must enter controlled airspace following the SID.
   2. Alternatively, the clearance may issued without departure instructions – i.e., "*cleared to [DEST] via flight planned route.*" In which case the aircraft may manuever at its own discretion on departure, and shall enter controlled airspace tracking towards the first waypoint of its flight plan.
3. **The AFIS unit relays the clearance to the pilot, and verifies the pilot's readback.**
   - When relaying the clearance, AFIS units shall relay the clearance exactly as provided by Reykjavik ACC, **except** that they shall use the phrase "Reykjavik Control clears you to..." instead of "Cleared to..."
     - This indicates that the clearance was issued under the authority of Reykjavik ACC, not the AFIS unit.
     - This is true even if Iceland Radio issued the clearance, because Iceland Radio is part of Reykjavik ACC.

If there is no overlying ATC, or if the aircraft will not enter controlled airspace at all during its flight (e.g., domestic Greenland traffic remaining below FL195 the entire flight), then the aircraft shall be told to depart at its discretion.

> There is no AFIS equivalent to VFR departure, arrival, or circuit clearances. VFR aircraft simply depart and arrive at their discretion.

Weather Information

AFIS aerodromes do not typically have an ATIS broadcast. Therefore, AFIS shall offer all aircraft the latest weather (met) information – for departures, after readback of their clearance, and for arrivals, on first contact. This shall always include the winds and QNH, and may also include other significant meteorological information (SIGMET, turbulence, etc.) The full met report shall be provided upon request.

(Note: Pilots may have also have obtained the METAR from their own sources. If a pilot does not require the weather, the AFIS unit does not need to provide the full met report, but ***must still provide the latest QNH.)***

> At some aerodromes, AFIS uses a **Turbulence Weather Indicator (TWI)** to predict expected turbulence on departure/arrival based on local winds.
>
> For EKVG, one of our controllers, Ollie Killean, has created a simulated TWI webpage using data pulled from the Faroese AIP, available here:
>
> https://vats.im/twi
>
> Suggested phraseology is "*[Light/moderate/severe] turbulence indicated for [departure/arrival] runway [XX].*"
>
> Thanks to Ollie for creating this!

Runway in Use

AFIS units determine an active runway for their airport. See the Tower SOP for how to select an active runway.

AFIS units shall notify the overlying Reykjavik ACC controller, as well as Nuuk Information (BGGL_FSS) for Greenlandic airports, of their chosen active runway.

> **At EKVG:** If turbulence is indicated as **severe** for any runway by the TWI, then EKVG AFIS shall **close that runway** for departures and/or arrivals (whichever has severe turbulence indicated.) EKVG AFIS shall also notify the overlying Reykjavik ACC controller accordingly.
>
> Suggested phraseology is: "*Runway [XX] closed for [departure/arrival], severe*

> *turbulence indicated.*"

Ground Movements

In Iceland and GLFI, AFIS units are generally authorized by airport management to direct ground movements *outside of runways*, and have the authority to refuse the entry of aircraft onto runways.

This means that aircraft will call AFIS for startup, pushback, and taxi. AFIS shall provide startup clearance. For ground pushback & taxi, aircraft may navigate at their discretion, but if AFIS sees any conflicting traffic, AFIS may instruct aircraft to hold position, take an alternative route, etc.

Note that while AFIS can instruct an aircraft to hold short of/remain clear of the runway, AFIS lacks any authority over what the aircraft does once it is on the runway (crossing, backtracking, lining up, etc.)

Takeoff & Landing

AFIS units shall **not** issue takeoff or landing clearances. If the runway is clear of traffic, then the AFIS unit shall inform departing or arriving aircraft that there is **“no reported traffic runway XX.”** (simply "no reported traffic on the runway" is acceptable at a single runway airport.)

Aircraft, when told this, may line up, depart, or land on the runway at their own discretion.

For example:

> “FLI402, winds 130 degrees 4 knots, no reported traffic runway 12.

If there **is** traffic blocking the runway in any way, then the AFIS unit shall inform departing aircraft **“runway XX occupied,”** provide traffic information, and ask for the aircraft’s intentions. For example:

>

> FLI402, runway is occupied, traffic is a company A320 backtracking to vacate the runway, report intentions.

> **NOTE:** Even if the runway is occupied, aircraft may still use that runway at their discretion. They are only obligated by the rules of the air not to hinder other traffic.
>
> E.g., if one aircraft is vacating at one end of the runway, another aircraft may reasonably line up on the *opposite* end of the runway, if doing so would not obstruct the vacating aircraft.

Traffic/Flow Management Strategies

Generally speaking, the inability of AFIS to control when aircraft choose to depart poses a significant limitation on AFIS's ability to control the flow of inbound/outbound traffic. This may be remedied using two strategies.

- Firstly, AFIS may provide traffic management **suggestions** to pilot.
  - E.g., "traffic are two aircraft, one on initial approach and one on short final, suggest you remain in the hold for spacing," or "traffic is a Boeing 757 departed 1 minute ago, suggest you delay departure by 2 minutes for wake turbulence and route separation"
- Secondly, AFIS may coordinate with the overlying ACC unit to issue **"valid at"** clearances (e.g., "clearance valid at time 1234z").
  - While this is not strictly speaking a prohibition on an aircraft's ability to take off, a clearance not being valid means the aircraft would not be able to proceed on its planned flight, so it is practically speaking required to wait until its clearance is valid before commencing its departure roll.

Airborne Traffic

AFIS units shall proactively offer traffic, weather, and aerodrome information to aircraft in their area of responsibility, in order to facilitate their safe navigation.

Traffic information should be provided using procedural methods, since AFIS units generally do not have radar. Thus, AFIS units may ask aircraft to provide position reports, such as:

- Waypoints/fixes on their route, or on published SIDs, STARs, and approach procedures which the aircraft intends to fly
- Positions relative to the airport or a waypoint/fix (e.g., abeam the airport, 5 NM from XX NDB, etc.)
- Phases of approach (e.g., final, established on the ILS, etc.)
- Legs of the traffic circuit (e.g., downwind, final, etc.)

Aircraft arriving an aerodrome (entering the ATZ/FIZ or traffic circuit) shall be told the active runway as well as any relevant traffic information.

At certain aerodromes (e.g., BGGH), there may be mandatory reporting points for aircraft. Refer to the SOP for those airports for clarification.

Aircraft do not require the AFIS unit's approval to leave the frequency once they are outside of the ATZ/FIZ/vicinity of the aerodrome. However, if the aircraft will be entering controlled airspace, AFIS should advise them to contact the relevant ATC unit.

- E.g., at EKVG, aircraft should be advised to contact Reykjavik Control approaching 7500ft.

ATS Surveillance (APP & Area Control)

This page details procedures for providing air traffic control service using ATS surveillance (secondary radar, MLAT, or ADS-B.) This includes Approach (APP) and Area Control positions.

Transition Altitude & Level

The Transition Altitudes in the Reykjavik CTA are:

- **Iceland:** 7000ft
- **Faroe Islands (EKVG):** 7500ft
- **Greenland:** Varies by aerodrome, see table below for reference.

Airport	TA
Ilulissat (BGJN)	6000ft
Kulusuk (BGKK)	7000ft
Maniitsoq (BGMQ)	9000ft
Narsarsuaq (BGBW)	9000ft
Constable Pynt (BGCO)	6000ft
Nuuk (BGGH)	7000ft
Paamiut (BGPT)	6000ft
Qaanaaq (BGQQ)	6500ft
Sisimiut (BGSS)	8000ft

Upernavik (BGUK)	6000ft
Uummannaq Qaarsut (BGUQ)	10,000ft
Aasiaat (BGAA)	6000ft

> **NOTE:** The TAs listed above may become out of date over time. Please always refer to the AIP for the correct TA of a given airport or region.

The Transition Level shall be determined by adding a certain number of feet to the Transition Altitude, depending on the current local QNH. The following table shall be used:

QNH	<929	930-946	947-963	964-979	980-996	997-1012	>1013
TL	*+3000ft* *from TA*	*+2500ft*	*+2000ft*	*+1500ft*	*+1000ft*	*+500ft*	*+0ft*

Horizontal Separation Under ATS Surveillance

In practice, the minimum horizontal separation under ATS surveillance in the Reykjavik CTA/OCA is:

- **3 NM** within 30 NM radius of KFV VOR (to be used only by Keflavik & Reykjavik Approach)
- **5 NM** east of 30W*
- **10 NM** west of 30W*

> *Strictly speaking, per Icelandic regulations, this is subject to the use of ADS-B surveillance and the altitude/level of the aircraft. Because enroute ADS-B surveillance is now available throughout the *entire* Reykjavik CTA/OCA, in practice the distinction between 5 & 10 NM separation is the 30W meridian (the boundary between the West & South sector) with level not being a factor.

Vertical Separation

The minimum vertical separation in the Reykjavik CTA is as follows:

- **Below FL290:** 1000ft for all aircraft
- **FL290-FL410:** 1000ft* or 2000ft between a formation flight and any other aircraft
- **Above FL410:** 2000ft for all aircraft
- **At or above FL450:** 4000ft between supersonic aircraft, and between supersonic aircraft and any other aircraft

**Technically, this is subject to aircraft being RVSM-equipped. However, on VATSIM, we assume that any aircraft that has filed an RFL above FL290 is RVSM-equipped.*

Wake Turbulence Separation

Following ICAO standards, the following minimum distances must be applied whenever:

- An aircraft directly follows another at the same altitude or less than 1,000 ft below it
- If both aircraft are using the same runway or parallel runways separated by less than 760m
- An aircraft is crossing behind another aircraft, at the same altitude or less than 300m (1000 ft) below

MINIMUM WAKE TURBULENCE SEPARATION (Nautical Miles)					
		First (Preceding) Aircraft			
		Light (L)	**Medium (M)**	**Heavy (H)**	**Super (J)**
Second (Trailing) Aircraft	**Light (L)**	—	5 NM	6 NM	8 NM
	Medium (M)	—	—	5 NM	7 NM
	Heavy (H)	—	—	4 NM	6 NM

Super (J)	—	—	—	—

A VFR trailing an IFR aircraft, as well as IFR aircraft on a visual approach, may reduce to separation below these minima. However, ATC must inform the pilot “caution wake turbulence” before the separation drops below these minima. Moreover, ATC may **not** instruct an aircraft to reduce below these minima – the pilot must do so on their own initiative.

Allocation of Cruising Levels

In BIRD CTA, cruising levels are allocated following these general rules:

IFR:

- *Below FL410:* Levels are separated by 1000ft, and allocated following the East/West semi-circular rule (i.e., Eastbound flights fly at odd thousands of feet, and Westbound flights fly at even thousands of feet)
- *Above FL410:* Levels are separated by 2000ft (thus, all valid levels are odd).

VFR:

- *3000ft – FL195:* Levels are separated by 1000ft, and allocated following the East/West semi-circular rule + 500ft (i.e., Eastbound flights fly at odd thousands of ft + 500ft, and Westbound flights fly at even thousands of ft + 500ft).

> No VFR levels are allocated above FL195, as all airspace in BIRD CTA above FL195 is Class A, and thus VFR is not permitted.

The following table of valid levels, based on Icelandic AIP ENR 1.7.5, may be used as reference:

WESTBOUND ← Track 180-359° ←		**EASTBOUND** → Track 000-179° →	
IFR	*VFR*	*IFR*	*VFR*
2000ft	2500ft	3000ft	3500ft
4000ft	4500ft	5000ft	5500ft
6000ft	6500ft	7000ft	7500ft (FL75)

8,000ft (FL80)	8500ft (FL85)	9000ft (FL90)	9500ft (FL95)
10,000ft (FL100)	10,500ft (FL105)	11,000ft (FL110)	11,500ft (FL115)
12,000ft (FL120)	12,500ft (FL125)	13,000ft (FL130)	13,500ft (FL135)
14,000ft (FL140)	14,500ft (FL145)	15,000ft (FL150)	15,500ft (FL155)
16,000ft (FL160)	16,500ft (FL165)	17,000ft (FL170)	17,500ft (FL175)
18,000ft (FL180)	18,500ft (FL185)	19,000ft (FL190)	19,500ft (FL195)
20,000ft (FL200)		21,000ft (FL210)	
22,000ft (FL220)		23,000ft (FL230)	
24,000ft (FL240)		25,000ft (FL250)	
28,000ft (FL280)		27,000ft (FL270)	
30,000 ft (FL300)		29,000ft (FL290)	
32,000ft (FL320)		31,000ft (FL310)	
34,000ft (FL340)		33,000ft (FL330)	
36,000ft (FL360)		35,000ft (FL350)	
38,000ft (FL380)		37,000ft (FL370)	
40,000ft (FL400)		39,000ft (FL390)	
43,000ft (FL430)		41,000ft (FL410)	
47,000ft (FL470)		45,000ft (FL450)	
51,000ft (FL510)		49,000ft (FL490)	
etc.		etc.	

Minimum Vectoring Altitude

The Minimum Vectoring Altitude (MVA) is the minimum altitude at which ATC may clear aircraft to during vectoring/direct routing, except if otherwise authorized for radar approaches, departures, and missed approaches.

MVA areas may be specifically defined/established in certain airspaces (e.g., the Faxi TMA.) If there is no minimum vectoring altitude explicitly established for a given area, then the MVA is either the area minimum altitude (AMA) or minimum sector altitude (MSA).

Iceland's AMAs may be found in Iceland AIP, ENR 6.1-3. In Greenland or the Faroe Islands, all AMAs and MSAs are below controlled airspace, so they are irrelevant for MVA purposes.

Descent Below Controlled Airspace

Over Iceland

IFR aircraft may be cleared to descend below controlled airspace if a descent procedure (a STAR or instrument approach procedure) has been published for their arrival aerodrome. At such aerodromes, two options are possible:

- Aircraft may be cleared for a specific descent procedure first, then cleared to descend below controlled airspace.
- Aircraft may also be simply cleared to descend below controlled airspace, without specifying a procedure. However:
  - Their cleared routing must include a waypoint/beacon where at least one of the published descent procedures at that aerodrome would originate from.
  - They must report to ATC the procedure they intend to follow.

If an IFR aircraft wishes to descend below controlled airspace at an airport with **no** published descent procedures, then they may be descended no lower than the area minimum altitude (see Iceland AIP, ENR 6.1-3), and must **cancel IFR** for further descent.

If an aircraft wishes to fly a different procedure than previously cleared, the pilot must contact the ACC unit or local AFIS unit and request a reroute to the beacon/waypoint where their requested procedure begins from. Alternatively, the pilot may cancel IFR and continue VFR.

Over Greenland, the Faroe Islands, or the Atlantic Ocean

Where the minimum altitude of a region is below the Reykjavik CTA, such as over Greenland, the Faroe Islands, or the Atlantic Ocean, aircraft may receive clearance to descend below controlled airspace without canceling IFR, even if there is no published descent procedure.

Transfer of Control & Communications

The transfer of control between ATS units takes place at the airspace boundary, or at the transfer of control point if otherwise designated. The transferring unit should transfer communications with the aircraft to the receiving unit no less than **2 minutes** or **30 NM** (whichever is greater) before the transfer of control point.

For arriving traffic, communications should be transferred to Tower as early as practicable once the aircraft is established on final approach, and at no later than **6 NM final.**

Silent Transfer of Control

Traffic on the same track, or crossing tracks, may be transferred silently (i.e., without prior verbal coordination) between two units if the longitudinal separation between them is at least:

- **10 NM** constant or increasing when the receiving sector uses 5 NM or less separation minima (i.e., east of 30W)
- **15 NM** constant or increasing when the receiving sector uses 10 NM separation minima (i.e., west of 30W)

> LOAs with neighboring sectors may specify different requirements for transferring control to that sector.

If the separation between two aircraft does not meet the above requirements, they must be verbally coordinated with the next unit before transferring control. If speed control is being used to accomplish the required separation, aircraft should be instructed to report their speed to the next controller.

Releases

A release is an approval given for a receiving unit to climb, descend, and/or turn aircraft before the transfer of control point. Standard releases may be detailed in LOPs or LOAs with neighbouring sectors. They may also be coordinated verbally, or granted via the TopSky Release function.

Note:

- Releases for turns do not exceed 45° unless explicitly coordinated.
- The transferring unit remains responsible for separation within their own AoR, unless otherwise coordinated.

Hold Management

As of writing, the Reykjavik CTA currently has no published enroute holds. Published holds on STARs which are within a TMA shall be managed by the APP unit responsible for said TMA. E.g., the published holds on BIKF's STARs, within the Faxi TMA, are managed by Keflavik Approach.

If the published holds in the TMA are full, then APP should coordinate with the overlying ACC unit to hold aircraft outside of the TMA. Such holds should be managed by the ACC unit.

Two aircraft in the same holding stack must be separated vertically by 1000ft, or greater if required by the minimum vertical separation rules. Controllers must not clear an aircraft to hold at a level lower than the Minimum Holding Altitude (MHA) for any published hold.

Published holds may be issued using the abbreviated phraseology: *"Hold at **[FIX]** as published, **[LEVEL].**"* For example:

> ICE123, hold at MEBUN as published, FL160.

When issuing a non-published hold, or if a pilot requests the full details of the hold, the following information should be given at minimum:

- Holding fix
- Level
- Inbound track/course

The following may also be specified:

- Turn direction (left or right turns. If not specified, it is assumed that the holding shall use right turns.)
- Time/length of leg (in minutes or NM. If not specified, it is assumed that the holding shall use 1-minute legs.)

The following phraseology may be used: ***[CALLSIGN]**, hold at **[FIX], [LEVEL], [INBOUND COURSE], [LEFT/RIGHT]*** turns, ***[LEG TIME/LENGTH].*** For example:

> ICE789, hold at MALAB, FL120, inbound course 097, left turns, 1 minute legs.

Change of Flight Rules

While the majority of flights are conducted under one set of flight rules (either IFR or VFR), aircraft may occasionally wish to change from one set of flight rules to another.

> **Note:** If the change of flight rules would be unsafe for any reason (e.g., aircraft requests to switch to VFR but is not in VMC), or would increase the controller's workload beyond manageable levels, the controller may deny any request to change flight rules.

Flight Planning

If an aircraft plans in advance to switch flight rules at a specific point in its flight plan, it may do so by adding "VFR" or "IFR" to its flight plan routing at that point. E.g., if the flight plan routing states:

```
...KFV/N180A050 IFR DCT RK...
```

...that indicates the aircraft will request to change to IFR at KFV (at which point they will be at speed 180kts and 5000ft.)

> In real life, a flight plan with a combination of IFR or VFR should be filed with the flight rule code "Y" (for IFR first then VFR) or "Z" (for VFR first then IFR.) VATSIM's flight plan form does not currently support these codes, so pilots will generally file their flight plans with the flight rules they intend to start the flight with.

Note that aircraft **do not have to pre-plan** a change of flight rules. Sometimes, requests to change flight rules are spontaneous, being driven by the constantly-evolving flight and weather situation (e.g., VFR flight finds itself in IMC and so requests IFR.)

VFR to IFR

For an aircraft to transition from VFR to IFR, the following conditions shall be fulfilled:

- The aircraft must be identified on ATS surveillance (if available), and the Mode C altitude return verified

- The aircraft should meet the IFR separation minima from other IFR aircraft (if not, ATC shall issue instructions to ensure this separation at the point that the IFR clearance becomes effective)

An IFR clearance may then be issued. As with IFR clearances issued on the ground, these clearances generally contain the following elements:

- **Clearance limit**
  - Generally the destination airport, or more rarely, a specific waypoint/beacon/fix if the pilot only wishes to continue IFR to that point
- **Routing**
  - Either "flight planned route," if the aircraft is following a previously flight planned IFR routing. ATC may also provide a routing or instructions, e.g., a radar vector
- **Level**
  - If the aircraft will climb/descend to an altitude & they were not previously given the local QNH, they should be given the QNH as well
- **Squawk** (if not previously assigned)

E.g.,

> “N804AB, cancel VFR, cleared to Isafjordur via direct KFV then flight planned route, climb FL100, squawk 4122.

The following is an example of a clearance issued to a limit that is *not* an airport (e.g., the pilot has requested only to be cleared to a specific published hold so they can descend IFR through clouds while holding, then cancel IFR once in VMC):

> “(TF-)ISN, cancel VFR, cleared IFR direct to MALAB, hold at MALAB as published, descend 3000ft, report VMC.

If ATC is unable to ensure the required separation from other IFR traffic, or does not have the capacity to handle aditional IFR in their airspace, ATC shall **deny** the aircraft's request for an IFR clearance, and may in turn deny the aircraft permission/clearance to enter a given airspace). ATC should then ask for the aircraft's intentions.

IFR to VFR

For an aircraft to transition from VFR to IFR, the pilot shall report their intention to cancel IFR to ATC. If ATC is able to accept this, ATC shall respond by acknowledging the cancellation of IFR, noting the time of cancellation, and providing any further instructions for the aircraft's continued VFR flight. E.g.,

> (TF-)ABC, IFR cancellation received at 1345z, maintain VFR, join the right hand circuit for runway 13...

If ATC is aware of IMC weather conditions in the aircraft's vicinity, or if ATC does not have the capacity to handle additional VFR in their airspace, ATC shall **deny** the aircraft's request to cancel IFR and ask for their intentions.

Oceanic Area Control

The Reykjavik CTA is unique in that much of it is also designated as oceanic airspace. This page outlines the specific rules and procedures relevant to oceanic airspace.

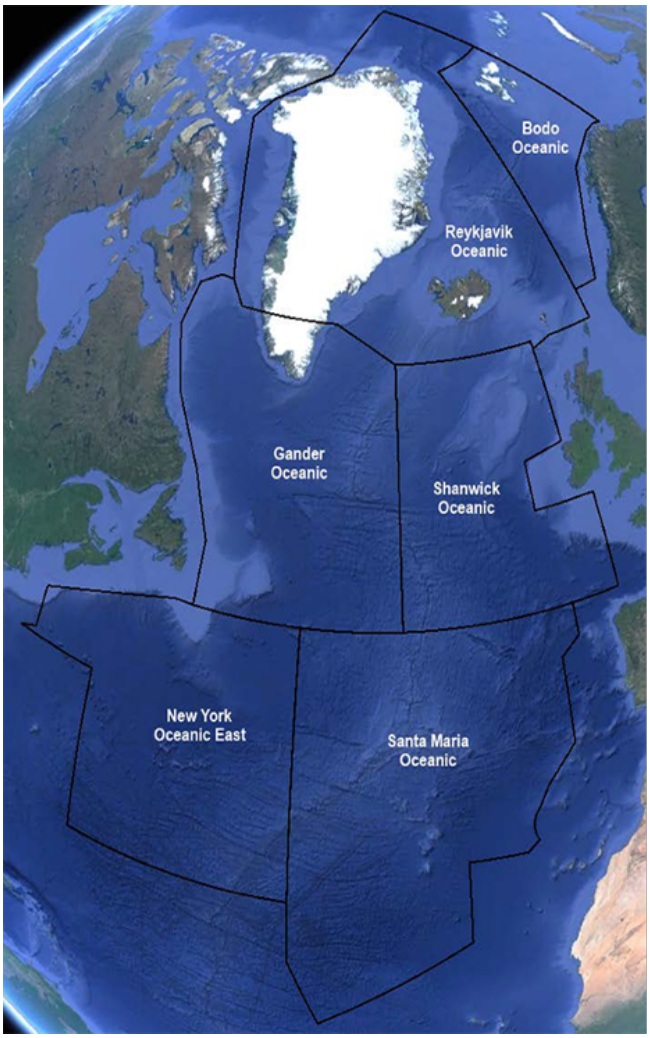
> As of 19th March 2026 aircraft entering the Reykjavik ACC no longer require an RCL as per Nat Doc 007 Chapter 6 section 6.3.24

Oceanic Airspace

Within the Reykjavik CTA, all controlled airspace outside of the Icelandic Domestic Area is considered oceanic airspace. This airspace is designated the **Reykjavik Oceanic Area (OCA).**

> Because the Reykjavik ACC (Area Control Centre) is responsible for the Reykjavik OCA, it is also referred to as the Reykjavik **OAC** (Oceanic Area Control Centre.) The terms "Reykjavik ACC" and "Reykjavik OAC" are generally interchangeable for VATSIM purposes.

The Reykjavik OCA is one of six oceanic areas that make up the **North Atlantic (NAT) oceanic airspace,** together with Gander, Shanwick, New York, Santa Maria, and Bodo OFIR (Oceanic FIR).



> **VFR is prohibited in oceanic airspace (which is all Class A.)** VFR aircraft must either fly below controlled airspace, or request IFR clearance to transit oceanic airspace.

NAT Tracks

The North Atlantic oceanic airspace uses a system of tracks called the **North Atlantic Organised Track System (NAT OTS,)** to regulate traffic crossing the ocean. While usually remaining in Shanwick & Gander OCAs, the tracks do occasionally enter the Reykjavik OCA.

For an introduction to the NAT OTS, read this guide published by Gander Oceanic on VATSIM. (Ignore the sections on the Tango routes & Concorde tracks, as they are not relevant to BIRD OCA.)

Entering Oceanic Airspace

When entering the Reykjavik ACC an aircraft will be identified by the controller and may request a Mach number for future planning

> Reykjavik Control ICE123 FL380
>
> ICE123, Idenfied say Mach number
>
> Mach decimal 83 ICE123
>
> ICE123, roger maintain Mach decimal 83

The controller will either then increase their mach number or decrease, depending on traffic flow within the sector, essentially if it's a group of aircraft going into Keflavik

Entering/Exiting Other NAT OCAs

Aircraft entering BIRD OCA from other NAT OCAs (e.g., Gander, Shanwick, etc.) **do not** have to submit another RCL message to BIRD. However, aircraft leaving BIRD OCA to another OCA **will need** to submit an RCL.

Within Oceanic Airspace

CPDLC

Within the Reykjavik ACC, airborne traffic can utilise CPDLC as a form of communication as per the eaip for Iceland section 3.4 Communication services

The logon code is BIRD

We do not offer PDC or DCL clearances within the Faxi TMA. This also includes the Faroe Islands and Greenland

Cost Index (ECON) Operations

In oceanic airspace, aircraft may fly in Cost Index (ECON) mode for optimal fuel efficiency – i.e., they may deviate by up to **±0.02 Mach** from the Mach number originally submitted in their flight plan, without prior permission (e.g., if they submitted Mach 0.78, they may fly between Mach 0.76-Mach 0.80 without notifying ATC.)

If they deviate by >0.02 Mach from the originally reported Mach number, they must notify ATC.

Controllers may still instruct aircraft to fly a fixed Mach number if required for separation.

> A similar procedure was previously known as "Operation Without Assigned Fixed Speed" (OWAFS.) The difference is that now, pilots are expected to fly ECON mode *by default,* not just when ATC instructs "resume normal speed."

Strategic Lateral Offset Procedures (SLOP)

Traffic in BIRD OCA **above FL285** may use SLOP (Strategic Lateral Offset Procedures). This is a random offset right of the aircraft's track, intended to "artificially" induce a navigation error that reduces the likelihood two aircraft will occupy the same airspace at once.

At the pilot's discretion, aircraft with the capability to offset (using their FMS) may offset **right** of track **(left offsets are prohibited)** up to a maximum of 2 NM (the exact offset the pilot chooses should be random) **ATC does not need to approve SLOP, or be informed when SLOP is in use.**

Aircraft shall not apply SLOP below FL285 in the Reykjavik OCA, and shall end the use of SLOP before entering domestic airspace.

VATSIM Logon Procedures

Empty Position

Whenever logging onto a position that **no one else is covering** (directly or top-down), always inform adjacent and overlying controllers via the ATC chat (and also following up via private message if appropriate.)

Handing Over/Relieving a Position

Whenever logging onto a position that is being **covered by someone else** (directly or top-down), controllers should first:

- **Ideally log on as an observer (OBS)** for 5-10 minutes before connecting, to observe the traffic situation.
- **Check with the other controller,** to make sure they are okay with being relieved, and to agree on the time for the position handover.
  - The controller taking over the position is the *relieving controller* and the controller who is handing over the position is the *relieved controller.*

Then, during the position handover:

1. **The relieving controller logs onto VATSIM on Euroscope and AFV using an appropriate relief callsign.** Generally, one should add an extra underscore before the facility suffix (after the FIR and sector identifier) — for example, `BIKF_TWR` may be relieved by `BIKF__TWR`, and `BIRD_S1_CTR` may be relieved by `BIRD_S1__CTR`.
   - Sometimes, AFV may not properly detect relief callsigns, especially for `_CTR` positions. In this case, one should manually add the original callsign/frequency of the position and XC on the original callsign, to allow access to the correct transceivers for the position.

- If the other controller is already using a relief callsign, then one may log on with the original position callsign.

2. **The relieved controller shall brief the relieving controller on the current situation regarding the position.** This shall include, at minimum:
   - **TRAFFIC** information for all aircraft under the position's area of responsibility, particularly those which are unusual or coordinated differently than usual.
     - When controlling area control (BIRD/BGGL/BICC), for any "normal" aircraft without special circumstances to note, the relieved controller may simply transfer tags silently to the relieving controller.
   - **AERODROME** information for all airports under the position's area of responsibility — active/preferred runways, latest ATIS letter if applicable, whether the airport is in IMC/VMC, etc.
   - **AIRSPACE** information about any relevant active airspace area (danger, warning, etc.)
   - **COORDINATION** agreed with neighboring sectors.
   - Any other relevant **INFORMATION** necessary to control the position.
3. **Once the briefing is complete, the relieving controller shall verify that:**
   - They have all tags assumed & all aircraft on frequency.
   - They have connected all ATISes.
   - They have all the information required to control their position.

Once all the above is complete, the relieved controller may disconnect, and the handover is complete.

Conduct During Position Relief

Until the handover has been formally completed, the relieving controller shall not interfere with the operation of the position. This includes:

- Not transmitting on the operational frequency unless specifically requested by the relieved controller.
- Not issuing clearances, instructions, or traffic information to aircraft.
- Not modifying tags, flight plans, scratchpads, or controller settings affecting live traffic unless coordinated.
- Not assuming control of aircraft until explicitly transferred by the relieved controller.

The relieved controller remains fully responsible for the position and all traffic under their control until the handover briefing is complete and control has been formally transferred. The relieving controller should remain in an observing and monitoring role during this period.

Mentoring

Whenever a mentor and a student are logging on, the guidelines in the VATSCA Student & Mentor SOP shall be followed. The following should be noted in particular:

- **The student shall log on <u>before</u> the mentor.** This reduces the likelihood that Euroscope will get "confused" and mistake the mentor connection as the primary controller.
- **The mentor shall log on with the midfix `_M_` in their callsign** (e.g., `BIKF_TWR`'s mentor should have the mentor callsign `BIKF_M_TWR`.) The student may log on with the usual callsign of the position.
- **The mentor should verify that the student has the correct Euroscope sector ID in their controller list.** E.g., BIKF_TWR should have sector ID "KFT."
- If the sector ID is displaying as simply numbers (10, 11, etc.), then the mentor may try the following steps:
    - Log off & on again
    - Use the midfix `_Z_` instead of `_M_`
    - Deselect the primary frequency of the position in Euroscope (and accept that Euroscope will not highlight the correct area of responsibility)