Managing VFR Traffic in the CTR

Traffic Information

In most cases, VFR aircraft are expected to maintain their own separation from other traffic, using traffic information provided by ATC. Thus, providing accurate traffic information to VFR pilots is critical to help them safely maintain their own separation from other traffic.

When providing traffic information, one should **describe the traffic** (aircraft type + airline if applicable) and **where it is.**

> **TWR controllers should refrain from giving radar-based traffic information** with information such as “X o’clock” or a specific distance. While VATSIM controller clients like Euroscope simulate a radar scope, a real-life tower rarely has radar. One should instead give traffic info that is based on the aircraft’s location in your airspace as **reported by the pilot,** or as **visible from the tower** (if not using a tower view, one may make a best guess based on the fact that the human eye can see up to 3 miles away in good conditions.)

> “[illegible]F-)SKN, traffic is an SR-22 inbound Videy on route 1.

> **Remember:** Traffic information goes both ways! If one gives traffic information to plane A about plane B, one should also give plane B information about plane A.

Sequencing VFR

TWR controllers should establish an orderly sequence for aircraft in their CTR. This includes aircraft in the circuit, and aircraft on approach. This should, as much as possible, follow the “natural” order based on where aircraft already are.

To create a sequence, controllers may inform aircraft of their number in the sequence, including traffic information about the aircraft ahead of them. E.g.,

> (TF-)ABB, you are number two, following a Cessna 172 turning base.

One may additionally instruct aircraft to join a certain leg of the circuit as a certain number in the circuit. E.g.,

> (TF-)SKN, traffic is a SR-22 on base and a Cessna 172 on downwind, join downwind as number three.

Note:

- **Do not use the phrase “join behind”** – it may imply to pilots they should follow as closely behind the other aircraft as possible. Always say **“after.”**
- If one is instructing an aircraft to join final after another aircraft of a heavier wake turbulence category, one must add the phrase **“caution wake turbulence”** after the instruction.
- While there is no formal priority of IFR traffic over VFR once both are in the CTR, most IFR aircraft (often heavier turboprops and jet airliners) moves a lot faster than light VFR traffic. TWR must account for this when building the arrival sequence.

Additional Strategies

In cases of heavy traffic, one also may employ two additional strategies.

Orbits

One may instruct aircraft to orbit (fly in a circle) at a given location. When instructing aircraft to orbit, one should specify:

- Location of the orbit
- How many orbits to perform (or "until further advised")
- The direction (left/right) of the orbits.

For example:

> “[illegible]F-)ABB, make left-hand orbits at the end of the downwind leg until further advised.

> “[illegible]F-)ABB, make one right-hand orbits at the end of the downwind leg, then join base.

Extending Downwind

One may also instruct aircraft to extend downwind, either to join final after another aircraft, until X miles from the airport, or until ATC instructs them to turn base.

> Don’t forget to turn the aircraft onto base once conflicting traffic is clear! Controllers often forget to call the aircraft’s base, causing them to fly a downwind that is far too long.

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