

# In English, please



Retrouvez dans le numéro d'octobre d'Info-Pilote, la présentation en français des changements du nouveau plan de vol OACI.

## NEW ICAO 2012 FLIGHT PLAN ARE YOU READY?

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It is quite difficult to find information on the origin of flight plans on the internet, or elsewhere. On [www.centennialofflight.gov](http://www.centennialofflight.gov), an American site dedicated to the history of flight, there is mention of the Bureau of Air Commerce, precursor to the FAA, requiring pilots to file flight plans and carry two-way radios as early as August 1935. That was the time when the increase in air traffic caused growing concerns over aircraft safety and the risk of mid-air collisions. Over the years, flight plan content and its processing have become more and more sophisticated, in keeping with the development in aircraft capabilities and the growing complexity and automation of air traffic management systems. The next step forward will occur on the 15th of November 2012, with the worldwide implementation of the "New ICAO 2012 Flight Plan".

### What is a flight plan?

As defined in ICAO Annex 2/ICAO Doc 4444, a flight plan is "a document which provides specified information to air traffic services units (ATSUs), relative to an intended flight or portion of a flight of an aircraft".

There are 3 categories of flight plans:

- full flight plans (FPLs) are filled in on the relevant form and filed through an Air Traffic Service Reporting Office (ARO) before departure, either as a written or an electronic document. If such a flight plan is filed when airborne, it is called AFIL.

- repetitive flight plans (RPLs) are for Aircraft

Operators (AO) who fly routes on a regular or scheduled basis. These plans are submitted once, are valid for a number of months, and activated automatically at the appropriate time before each flight. Most airlines have repetitive flight plans for regular scheduled flights which operate over the same route at least once a week.

- abbreviated flight plans cover only a portion of flight, for example to cross an airway, transit in a class D airspace, or operate a flight from a controlled airport. The elements needed for an abbreviated flight plan are limited, and can be passed over on the radio. It is typically what a VFR pilot does on first contact with an ATSU, not always completely aware that he is filing an abbreviated flight plan. The information gathered in this case is not forwarded to the destination aerodrome.

### When should you file an FPL?

All countries don't have exactly the same rules when it comes to flight plan submission. In France, the RDA 3.3.1.2 states that flight plans must be filed before:

- a flight or portion of a flight to be provided with air traffic control service;

- a flight conducted in accordance to IFR;

- a flight within or into designated areas, or along designated routes, when so required by the appropriate ATS authority to facilitate the provision of flight information service, alerting and search and rescue services;

- a flight within or into designated areas, or along designated routes, when so required by the appropriate ATS authority to facilitate co-ordination with appropriate military units or with air traffic services units in adjacent states in order to avoid the possible need for interception for the purpose of identification;

- a flight across international borders. In this case, the flight plan must be submitted at least 30 minutes before the estimated time of departure from the apron.

The VFR guide published by the SIA ([www.ais-webshop.eu/france/manuels-vfr.html](http://www.ais-webshop.eu/france/manuels-vfr.html)) gives more details on VFR flight plans and particularly the

circumstances when it is compulsory to file an FPL for VFR night or maritime flights.

Likewise, the UK Flight Planning Guide (CAP694, [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk)), reminds pilots that they may file a flight plan for any flight, then lists the flights when a pilot must file an FPL, and finally those when he should do so. It is also worth noting that a pilot in the UK is supposed to "book out": inform the ATSU at the aerodrome of departure that he intends to make a flight. Filing a flight plan is one way of doing it.

### Why file a flight plan?

Flight plans are compulsory for IFR flights for obvious reasons of air traffic flow management, automated dissemination of flight data to ATSUs along the route, and flight tracking.

The main reason for a VFR pilot to file a flight plan is to benefit from the alerting service. Provided that the FPL has been activated, air traffic services will keep track of the flight and will start looking for it if it is overdue at destination. This is why it is important to close a VFR flight plan, either by radio contact with the ATSU at the planned destination or a simple phone call when landing on an aerodrome without an operating tower. In case of diversion, a pilot must inform the controller at the alternate field that he had filed an FPL.

If the flight plan has not been closed within 30 minutes of the estimated time of arrival, search and rescue procedures will be gradually initiated.

### What will happen in November?

Well, to start with, the form in itself and its different fields remain the same. Only the content and syntax of some fields, namely 10, 16 and 18, will change significantly. All the new items cannot be pointed out here, there are too many of them. However, detailed information on the subject is available on the Eurocontrol internet site<sup>(1)</sup>. Let's say that these modifications will have an impact on flight plan processing and some flight plans might be rejected by the system if the different items have not been completed properly.

### Vocabulary

TO CLOSE AN FPL	clôturer un plan de vol
TO FILE AN FPL	déposer un plan de vol
TO FILL AN FPL	remplir un plan de vol
TO FORWARD	faire suivre
IMPLEMENTATION	mise en œuvre
MAY, MUST, SHOULD	peut, doit, devrait
TO OPEN, TO ACTIVATE AN FPL	activer un plan de vol
OVERDUE	en retard
RELEVANT	approprié
WHEN IT COMES TO	en ce qui concerne

(1) [www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/content/documents/nm/flight-planning/icao-2012/icao-2012-the-changes-latest.ppt#260,1,The Changes](http://www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/content/documents/nm/flight-planning/icao-2012/icao-2012-the-changes-latest.ppt#260,1,The Changes)