

Safety Hot Spot: Operations at Towered Airports Checkup

Flight Planning

- ✓ **Things change** — Check notams. The one time you don't get notams could be the time the runway at your destination airport is closed. Also, don't forget to check Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs).
- ✓ **Airport frequencies** — Review the sectional, instrument approach charts, or Airport/ Facility Directory (A/FD) for the airport's frequencies. Are your publications current? AOPA members can reference the continuously updated AOPA Online Airport Directory (www.aopa.org/members/airports/) for current frequencies.
- ✓ **Airport weather information** — ATIS frequencies can be found on sectionals, instrument approach charts, and in the A/FD. For a bigger weather picture, listen to AWOS and ASOS reports from nearby airports.
- ✓ **Don't leave home without them** — Airport diagrams help you get your bearings at unfamiliar airports. Download free airport diagrams from the AOPA Online Safety Center (www.aopa.org/asf/publications/taxi).
- ✓ **Fly friendly** — Some airports have noise abatement procedures. Check the A/FD for any special departure or arrival procedures designed to keep the neighbors happy. Some airports publish visual approaches along with their instrument approach charts. For an example, check out the White Plains, New York visual approach to Runway 34. (http://download.aopa.org/asf/hpn_sound_visual_rwy_34.pdf)
- ✓ **Land and what?** — Be familiar with land and hold short operations (LAHSO) in case they are used at your destination airport. Remember, you can refuse a LAHSO instruction (when ATC first offers it to you) by using the word "unable". To refresh your understanding of LAHSO procedures, take the Sporty's Safety Quiz in the AOPA Online Safety Center (<http://www.aopa.org/asf/asfquiz/quizzes.cfm?SA=Quizzes&QuizId=27>).
- ✓ **Educate yourself** — Review the AOPA Air Safety Foundation's *Operations at Towered Airports Safety Advisor* (www.aopa.org/asf/publications/sa07.pdf).

Aircraft Preflight

- ✓ **Check the radios** — Before calling ground control, ensure that the radio's volume and squelch are adjusted properly. Your initial call to ground control is not only an ATC communication requirement; it also serves as a radio check.
- ✓ **Check exterior lights** — Even during the day, exterior lights (especially landing and recognition lights) make your aircraft much easier to see and avoid. While ATC will help with collision avoidance, it is still the pilot's responsibility to see and avoid other traffic. The landing light can be used to tell others that you have been cleared to takeoff or land.

Airport Operations

- ✓ **Entry and exit strategies** — Have a plan before you get there. Listen to the ATIS 20 miles before arriving in the airport area to learn which runways are in use. Plot your position relative to the landing runway on the airport diagram so you'll know how to enter the traffic pattern (and what instructions to expect from ATC).
- ✓ **Remember your manners** — Be familiar with the correct communication terminology and keep it short: You're sharing the frequency with ATC and other pilots. When tower frequencies get very busy it's not unusual to hear ATC request pilots to "monitor only." That means you should only listen — not talk — on the frequency.
- ✓ **The worst time** — Bad things tend to happen at the worst times. Be familiar with lost communication procedures. Squawk 7600 and have a light gun signal reference sheet close at hand.
- ✓ **Airport diagrams** — Remember the airport diagram you got while planning this flight? Use it to taxi from the runway to parking!
- ✓ **Which way** — Airport diagram not enough? Ask ATC for progressive taxi instructions and always adhere to all airport signs and markings. For a refresher on what they all mean, review ASF's flashcards (www.aopa.org/asf/online_courses/flashcards) and the free *Runway Safety* online course (www.aopa.org/asf/runway_safety).