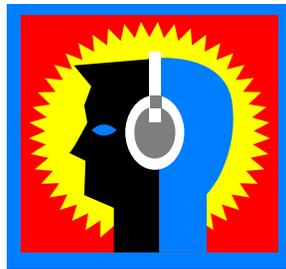




## Vanquishing the VPD

A quarterly publication from the  
Safety Section  
Federal Aviation Administration Airports Division  
Western-Pacific Region



This publication is primarily directed towards airport management to be disseminated to all levels of personnel working at your airfield. It does not matter how large or how small your airfield or how tight your budget may be or whether your airfield serves general aviation or air carrier operations, this information must be made available to your people by whatever means. Vanquishing the VPD can be accomplished through a solid partnership between the FAA and airport management. The responsibility of making sure safeguards are in place; however, lies squarely on the shoulders of the airport management. Please use this information and all that follows as a guide by which to produce a safer environment at your airfield.

This quarter I'd like to focus on communications. Strictly defined "communication" means "to share in common" or "to participate in". This definition implies more than one party is involved in the process; therefore, communication is, at the very minimum, a two way process. Breakdowns in communication can occur between the most disciplined professionals. For instance, breakdowns in communications often occur between pilots and controllers even though both parties have tried to discipline themselves to always adhere to the strictest rules of communication and standard phraseology.

For an individual who does not fly or who has little experience speaking over a radio with ATC, communication on an open frequency can be intimidating. Often times the intimidation goes much further than adhering to the protocol of addressing the party with whom you wish to speak, identifying yourself, identifying your position and stating your request. Add to the mix an individual who is attempting to communicate in an unfamiliar language with wall-to-wall jet noise surrounding his vehicle and the results can be disastrous. In some respects, communication with ATC is an art, which is learned by

experience and perfected by practice. Nearly every Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviation can be attributed to either poor communications or a total lack of it. Problems with communication develop not only on the side of transmission but on the side of reception as well. Sometimes we don't say what we mean and other times we don't hear what was said. Many times we assume a clearance was given when it was not. Often times, we accept a clearance given to another.

Unfortunately, even the most highly qualified persons operating vehicles on the airfield commit VPDs resulting in runway incursions. Case in point: On October 6, 2005, at 06:27L, at a busy airfield in the region, four ARFF (Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting) vehicles crossed an active runway without an ATC clearance while responding to a drill. According to the investigation, the lead ARFF vehicle and the three following vehicles held short of the runway and requested a clearance to cross on the north ground frequency. The lead ARFF vehicle was instructed to contact local north on a discreet emergency frequency. From that point on, communications between the tower and the lead ARFF vehicle broke down and, ultimately, all four ARFF vehicles crossed the runway without the tower's approval. The lead ARFF vehicle had requested clearance, heard a partial radio transmission but failed to read back and obtain acknowledgement from ATCT before crossing the runway with the other vehicles. Contributing factors included the wrong channel being monitored in the lead ARFF vehicle as well as the volume of the radio being set too low.

So what lessons have we learned about communications from this issue of Vanquishing the VPD?

1. NEVER enter or cross an active runway unless a runway specific clearance has been issued to you by ATCT and you have read it back.
2. NEVER operate a vehicle in the movement area if you have any question or are uncertain of the issued clearance.
3. If the tower is closed or if the airfield is uncontrolled ALWAYS self-announce position and/or intentions on the published CTAF frequency.
4. Have volume, channel selector and squelch adjusted properly on your VHF radio.
5. When operating an ARFF vehicle and monitoring multiple frequencies pay particularly close attention to whatever frequency ATC is issuing your movement clearances on.
6. Read back all runway hold short instructions.
7. "Rodger" does not mean "affirmative" and neither should be used as an abbreviated readback of a clearance.
8. NEVER use occupational-specific jargon and codes, such as 10-codes, when communicating to ATC.
9. NEVER allow cell phones or other portable electronic devices to distract you from your communication with the tower or air traffic at the airfield.
10. Don't fall victim to the "assumption mistake"; i.e., hearing what you expect or want to hear, rather than hearing your actual ATC clearance.
11. Establish a "mental picture" of airport activity around you.
12. Be aware that many airports have "blind" or "dead" spots where two-way radio communication with ATC is not possible.

13. Remember that the “stuck mike” on the frequency might just be your own.

**WHO IS DOING THINGS RIGHT?**

Ontario International Airport has recently revised their ARFF communications training procedures to help minimize confusion during an Alert and to minimize the possibility of a VPD becoming a runway incursion. At Ontario if several ARFF vehicles are responding to an Alert, it is the Incident Commander who communicates directly with ATC. After receiving clearance from ATC the Incident Commander then clears his vehicles through the movement areas using standard aviation phraseology. Full readbacks of runway hold short or runway proceed onto clearances are mandatory from the ARFF vehicles under the direct command of the Incident Commander. The monitoring of the appropriate VHF radio frequencies is now clearly spelled out: when maneuvering on taxiways, all vehicles monitor appropriate ground frequency; when holding short of an active runway all vehicles monitor appropriate local control frequency; when directed by ATC all vehicles monitor Discrete Radio Frequency as defined by the Letter of Agreement in the Airport Certification Manual. Ontario International is helping to make communication a two way process.

**QUARTERLY STATISTICS**

**HOW ARE WE DOING?**

**Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviation Tracking in the Western-Pacific Region**

Calendar Quarter 2005				Calendar Quarter 2006			
Month	Vehicle	Pedestrian	V/PD	Month	Vehicle	Pedestrian	V/PD
Apr	4	1	5	Apr	*3	3	6
May	4	1	5	May	4	1	5
June	6	1	*8	June	4	1	5
Total	14	3	18	Total	11	5	16

(\*Includes 1 Unspecified Military report)

(\*Includes 1 Aircraft under maintenance tow)

Total V/PDs in the Western-Pacific Region in the calendar year 2004: 68

Total V/PDs in the Western-Pacific Region in the calendar year 2005: 79

Total V/PDs in the Western-Pacific Region in the calendar year 2006 to date: 25

Tracking statistics provided by the AT Quality Assurance website.

For more information Airport Managers may consult the following sources of information:

Aeronautical Information Manual 8405, Chapter 4, Section 2. Radio Communication, Phraseology and Techniques

<http://www.faa.gov/ATpubs/AIM/Chap4/aim0402.html>

Advisory Circular 150/5210-20, Ground Vehicle Operations on Airports

<http://www.faa.gov/arp/150acs.cfm>

Advisory Circular 150/5210-7C, Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Communications

<http://www.faa.gov/arp/150acs.cfm>

CertAlert 06-05, Stop Runway Incursions and Surface Incidents Now

[http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/airport\\_safety/certalerts/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/airport_safety/certalerts/)

14 CFR Part 139.329, Pedestrians and ground vehicles

Ground Vehicle Guide to Airport Signs and Markings

Order on FAA website: <http://www.faa.gov/runwaysafety/order/>

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Reproductions of this and subsequent issues of Vanquishing the VPD are available on FAA Website:

[http://www.faa.gov/airports\\_airtraffic/airports/regional\\_guidance/western\\_pacific/airports\\_resources/newsletter/](http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/airports/regional_guidance/western_pacific/airports_resources/newsletter/)