

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Air Traffic Organization Policy

N JO 7110.696

Effective Date:
December 14, 2015

Cancellation Date:
May 26, 2016

SUBJ: Visual Separation

- 1. Purpose of This Notice.** This Notice clarifies existing procedures and responsibilities and revises phraseology to facilitate understanding of ATC clearances and instructions.
- 2. Audience.** This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support, and System Operations; and all associated terminal air traffic control facilities.
- 3. Where Can I Find This Notice?** This notice is available on the MyFAA employee Web site at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/ and on the air traffic publications Web site at http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/.
- 4. Background** Data presented to the ATO Safety Roundtable identified the improper application of visual separation procedures by controllers and pilots as one of the Top 5 contributors to increased risk in the National Airspace System (NAS). The Top 5, a quantifiable list of threats contributing to the highest NAS risk, is identified annually by the FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) to focus special consideration and scrutiny toward alleviating potential safety issues. The ATC Handbook Revision Steering Committee recommended changes to FAA Order JO 7110.65, paragraph 7-2-1, to clarify existing procedures and responsibilities and revise phraseology requirements to help ensure ATC clearances and instructions are understood.
- 5. Procedures.**

Change FAA Order JO 7110.65, paragraph 7-2-1 to read as follows:

7-2-1. VISUAL SEPARATION

Visual separation may be applied when other approved separation is assured before and after the application of visual separation. To ensure that other separation will exist, consider aircraft performance, wake turbulence, closure rate, routes of flight, known weather conditions, and aircraft position. Weather conditions must allow the aircraft to remain within sight until other separation exists. Visual separation is not authorized when the lead aircraft is a super.

REFERENCE-

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 2-1-20, Wake Turbulence Cautionary Advisories.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 2-1-21, Traffic Advisories.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 3-1-9, Use of Tower Radar Displays.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 5-9-5, Approach Separation Responsibility. FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-4-1, Visual Approach.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-4-2, Vectors for Visual Approach.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-4-4, Approaches to Multiple Runways.

P/CG Term- Visual Approach.

P/CG Term- Visual Separation.

a. **TERMINAL.** Visual separation may be applied between aircraft up to but not including FL180 under the following conditions:

1. Tower-applied visual separation.

(a) Maintain communication with at least one of the aircraft involved or ensure there is an ability to communicate immediately with applicable military aircraft as prescribed in paragraph 3-9-3, Departure Control Instructions, subparagraph a2.

(b) The tower visually observes the aircraft, issues timely traffic advisories, and provides visual separation between the aircraft.

(c) Issue control instructions as necessary to ensure continued separation between the applicable aircraft.

(d) Do not apply visual separation between successive departures when departure routes and/or aircraft performance preclude maintaining separation.

(e) The use of tower-applied visual separation is not authorized when wake turbulence separation is required.

(f) Adjacent airports with operating ATCTs are not authorized to apply visual separation between their traffic and the other ATCT's traffic.

2. Pilot-applied visual separation.

(a) Maintain communication with at least one of the aircraft involved and ensure there is an ability to communicate with the other aircraft.

(b) The pilot sees another aircraft and is instructed to maintain visual separation from the aircraft as follows:

(1) Tell the pilot about the other aircraft. Include position, direction, type and, unless it is obvious, the other aircraft's intention.

(2) Obtain acknowledgment from the pilot that the other aircraft is in sight.

(3) Instruct the pilot to maintain visual separation from that aircraft.

PHRASEOLOGY–

(ACID), TRAFFIC, (clock position and distance), (direction) BOUND, (type of aircraft), (intentions and other relevant information).

If required,

(ACID), REPORT TRAFFIC IN SIGHT or DO YOU HAVE IT IN SIGHT?

If the pilot reports traffic in sight, or the answer is in the affirmative,

(ACID), MAINTAIN VISUAL SEPARATION

NOTE -

Towers must use the procedures contained in Paragraph 3-1-6, Traffic Information, Subparagraph b or c, as appropriate.

(c) If the pilot reports the traffic in sight and will maintain visual separation from it (the pilot must state both), the controller may “approve” the operation instead of restating the instructions.

PHRASEOLOGY–

(ACID), APPROVED.

NOTE–

Pilot-applied visual separation between aircraft is achieved when the controller has instructed the pilot to maintain visual separation and the pilot acknowledges with their call sign or when the controller has approved pilot-initiated visual separation.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 5-4-5, Transferring Controller Handoff

(d) If aircraft are on converging courses, inform the other aircraft of the traffic and that visual separation is being applied.

PHRASEOLOGY–

(ACID), TRAFFIC, (clock position and distance), (direction) BOUND, (type of aircraft), HAS YOU IN SIGHT AND WILL MAINTAIN VISUAL SEPARATION.

(e) Advise the pilots if the targets appear likely to merge.

NOTE–

Issue this advisory in conjunction with the instruction to maintain visual separation, the advisory to the other aircraft of the converging course, or thereafter if the controller subsequently becomes aware that the targets are merging.

EXAMPLE–

“Targets appear likely to merge.”

(f) Control of aircraft maintaining visual separation may be transferred to an adjacent position/sector/facility. Coordination procedures must be specified in an LOA or facility directive.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7210.3, Para 4-3-1, Letters of Agreement

b. *EN ROUTE*. Visual separation may be used up to but not including FL 180 when the following conditions are met:

1. Direct communication is maintained with one of the aircraft involved and there is an ability to communicate with the other.

2. A pilot sees another aircraft and is instructed to maintain visual separation from it as follows:

(a) Tell the pilot about the other aircraft including position, direction, and type. If it is not obvious, include the other aircraft’s intentions.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 2-1-21, Traffic Advisories.

(b) Obtain acknowledgment from the pilot that the other aircraft is in sight.

(c) Instruct the pilot to maintain visual separation from that aircraft.

PHRASEOLOGY–

(ACID), TRAFFIC, (clock position and distance), (direction) BOUND, (type of aircraft), (intentions and other relevant information).

If required,

(ACID), REPORT TRAFFIC IN SIGHT or DO YOU HAVE IT IN SIGHT?

If the pilot reports traffic in sight, or the answer is in the affirmative,

(ACID), MAINTAIN VISUAL SEPARATION

(d) If the pilot reports the traffic in sight and will maintain visual separation (the pilot must state both), the controller may “approve” the operation instead of restating the instructions.

PHRASEOLOGY–

(ACID), APPROVED.

NOTE–

Pilot-applied visual separation between aircraft is achieved when the controller has instructed the pilot to maintain visual separation and the pilot acknowledges with their call sign or when the controller has approved pilot-initiated visual separation.

(e) Advise the pilot if the targets appear likely to converge.

(f) If aircraft are on converging courses, inform the other aircraft of the traffic and that visual separation is being applied.

PHRASEOLOGY–

(ACID) TRAFFIC, (clock position and distance), (direction)–BOUND, (type of aircraft), ON CONVERGING COURSE, HAS YOU IN SIGHT AND WILL MAINTAIN VISUAL SEPARATION.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–4–1, Visual Approach.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–4–2, Vectors for Visual Approach.

(g) Advise the pilots if either aircraft is a heavy.

(h) Issue wake turbulence cautionary advisories in accordance with para 2–1–20.

c. Nonapproach control towers may be authorized to provide visual separation between aircraft within surface areas or designated areas when approved separation is provided before and after the application of visual separation. The nonapproach control tower must apply the procedures contained in subparagraph a1 or a2, when applying visual separation.

PHRASEOLOGY–

VISUAL SEPARATION APPROVED BETWEEN (ACID) AND (ACID),

and for departing aircraft,

(departing/succeeding aircraft) (ACID), RELEASED.

d. If the nonapproach control tower controller states to the radar controller that they will provide visual separation between arrivals, departures/arrivals and/or successive departures, and states the call signs of all aircraft involved, the radar controller can approve the application of visual separation as requested.

PHRASEOLOGY–

VISUAL SEPARATION APPROVED

and for departing/succeeding aircraft,

(ACIDs) RELEASED

NOTE–

A nonapproach control tower by accepting authorization for visual separation becomes responsible for ensuring that separation. Separation of IFR aircraft before and after application of visual separation is an IFR control function that must be applied by the Approach/Departure/En Route facility. Separation requirements also apply to VFR aircraft when IFR, Class B, Class C or TRSA separation services are required.

REFERENCE–

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 4–8–11, Practice Approaches.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 5–6–1, Application.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–4–2, Vectors for Visual Approach.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–6–1, Application.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–1, Application.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–2, Issuance of EFC.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–3, Separation.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–4, Helicopter Traffic.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–5, Altitude Assignments.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–6, Approach Interval.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–7–7, TRSA Departure Information.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–8–2, Class C Services.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–8–3, Separation.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–8–4, Establishing Two-Way Communications.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7–8–5, Altitude Assignments.

FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-8-6, Exceptions.
FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-9-1, Application.
FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-9-3, Methods.
FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-9-4, Separation.
FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-9-6, Helicopter Traffic.
FAAO JO 7110.65, Para 7-9-7, Altitude Assignments.

7. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: Terminal, En Route and Systems Operations Services; the Office of ATO Safety and Technical Training; the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service; and the William J. Hughes Technical Center.

8. Safety Management System. The provisions of this notice are based on the Visual Separation Safety Risk Management Document (SRMD), Version 1.0, dated June 3, 2015. The SRMD supports procedural guidance contained in this notice.

Original signed by Maurice Hoffman
Heather Hemdal
Director, Air Traffic Procedures
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10/14/2015

Date Signed