

## Aircraft Call Signs

In the IFR environment it is extremely important that there no confusion between the controllers and pilots as to who the controllers are issuing a clearance to and who is accepting it. The AIM paragraph *a. 1. Precautions in the Use of Call Signs*: under **Aircraft Call Signs** reads: *Improper use of call signs can result in pilots executing a clearance intended for another aircraft.* That is exactly what happened on the following training flight. The transcript was taken from the Enroute Controller's tape.

Controller: Cherokee 96foxtrot turn right heading 290 join victor 12 west of Harrisburg resume your own navigation.

Cherokee 3096mike: Ah, 96mike say again please.

Controller: 96mike turn right heading 290 join victor 12 west of Harrisburg resume your own navigation.

2 aircraft at once: unreadable. 290 on the heading 96foxtrot.

Cherokee 3096mike: 290 on the heading join victor 12 west of Harrisburg.

Controller: 96foxtrot that's correct.

Cherokee 96foxtrot: 96foxtrot Harrisburg.

Controller: 96foxtrot Harrisburg go ahead.

Cherokee 96foxtrot: Was that last transmission for us 290 on the heading.

Controller: Somebody read it all back.

Cherokee 96foxtrot: 96foxtrot.

Controller: 96foxtrot one of you did get it, is that correct.

Cherokee 96foxtrot: I'm going on over to victor 12 now, 96foxtrot.

Controller: Roger heading 290 join victor 12 resume your own navigation.

Cherokee 96foxtrot: Thank you 96foxtrot.

Controller: 96mike contact Baltimore approach 133.0.

This is a good example of what can happen when two aircraft with similar call signs are on the same frequency. This controller did not realize what had happened until after I called the Chief of the ATC facility to get this tape. I was the instructor on 3096mike. Everyone involved is this was lucky that this did not create any hazard or unsafe condition. The AIM also tells us that we should never abbreviate call signs on an initial contact or at any time when other aircraft call signs have similar numbers/sounds of identical letters/numbers. Controllers are to do the same. The controller involved should not have abbreviated either call sign in this case. Pilots must be certain that a clearance is intended for them before taking action. Make sure that the clearance makes sense also. Cherokee 3096mike was IFR from York (THV) to Martin State (MTN). There was no way that victor 12 was going to take them to MTN. If there is ever any question about a clearance issued, the AIM recommends that pilots use the phrase "Verify clearance for" (your complete call sign). There is often a lot of chatter on an ATC frequency, so pilots must pay close attention to the radio. Some pilots just listen up for their call sign, but we should be aware of the complete picture

pointed to us on the radio. Use headsets. Noise canceling headsets are very good. It is a good idea to invest in a handheld radio. You don't necessary need a transceiver, just a receiver will do. Spend time on the ground listening to it. This time will be time well spent. Try to follow what is going on on the radio. Remember as PIC it is our responsibility to accept or refuse a clearance. Be sure the clearance is intended for you.