

# FLLIGHT

## TRAINING & CAREERS

### Proper Radio Communication Is Critical

By Harry Kraemer

Pilots spend a lot of time practicing maneuvers, approaches and landings. Often this is done with a flight instructor. They go out and get their flight reviews and instrument checks as required. However, not too many practice proper radio phraseology. Maybe they don't realize how much the radio can enhance safety. Some even use Common Traffic Advisory Frequencies, like a CB radio, to chitchat on! For those pilots, now is a good time to review the Airman's Information Manual (AIM), Section 2, "Radio Communications Phraseology and Techniques" states "Radio communications are a critical link in the ATC system. The link can be a strong bond between pilot and controller or it can be broken with surprising speed and disastrous results." Disastrous results are right. Take a look at one such accident, and what may have been avoided if all pilots involved used proper "Radio Communications Phraseology and Techniques."

This accident happened at UIN (Quincy, Ill.). It involved a Beech 1900C and a King Air A90. There was a third airplane that could have been a factor. The Beech 1900C was landing on Runway 13, and the King Air was planning to take off on Runway 4. The third airplane (a Cherokee) was holding short of Runway 4. As the King Air taxied to Runway 4, it made an announcement on the CTAF that it was holding short and was going to take off soon. The Beech 1900C made several calls on the CTAF and asked the King Air if it was going to hold or takeoff. The Cherokee, who was holding short on Runway 4 behind the King Air, responded (not using his aircraft type) that it was holding for departure on Runway 4. The King Air had started his take-off roll. "Aircraft Call Signs" (Paragraph a. 3.) states "Civil aircraft pilots should state the aircraft type, model or manufacturer's name, followed by the digit/letters of the registration number." The Beech 1900C continued the approach, mistaking the Cherokee's radio transmission for the King Air. The two aircraft collided at the intersection of Runways 13 and 4. Had the Cherokee responded with his type and tail number, the Beech 1900 might not have continued or might have tried to contact the King Air.

It is just as important to monitor the CTAF as it is to make proper calls on it. The NTSB determined that the crew of the King Air failed to monitor and transmit properly on the CTAF before starting its takeoff roll. The purpose of the CTAF is to carry out airport advisory practices while operating to or from an airport without an operating control tower (as defined by the AIM), Paragraph 4-1-9 "Traffic Advisory Practices at Airports without Operating Control Towers" (c. Recommended Traffic Advisory Practices: 1.) states "Pilots of departing aircraft should monitor/communicate on the appropriate frequency from start-up, during taxi, and until 10 miles from the airport unless the FARs or local procedures require otherwise." The NTSB report does not mention the King Air making any reports other than that it was holding short.



"Pilots spend a lot of time practicing maneuvers, approaches and landings ... however, not too many practice proper radio phraseology."

This brings to mind a term that you hear on CTAFs a lot that is misused or maybe not fully understood: "Active Runway." If we look in the Pilot/Controller Glossary under "Active Runway," we read: "Any runway or runways currently being used for takeoff or landing. When multiple runways are used, they are all considered active runways." Pilots need to watch how they use this term. If you land at an airport with several runways and you make an announcement on the CTAF that you are clear of the active, you would have been better off not to have said anything at all. You are just adding unnecessary noise to the frequency. If you have ever listened to a CTAF on a nice sunny Saturday, you will know what I mean. Sometimes there is so much chat on the frequency that it is hard to understand what anyone is saying.

Remember our friend the AIM. It also tells us that we should listen on a frequency before we transmit. If you are landing at an airport

served by a CTAF, listen on the CTAF before you call for an airport advisory and if pilots are making proper announcements, you will find out which runways are in use without adding to all the noise. But if someone says that they are clear of the active, you still don't know anything. Stating what runway you are clearing on the CTAF is good practice to get into. When landing at large tower-controlled airports with multiple runways, when clearing the runway, it is recommended to tell ground which runway you have just cleared, e.g., "XYZ ground, this is Citation 1234 with you off of runway 35 to the general aviation ramp."

If we look back at the accident and the King Air had said that it was departing on the active, the Beech 1900 still would not have known where he was. If you are departing a runway, a proper announcement on the CTAF

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# Radio

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would be, "XYZ traffic N1234 is departing on Runway 4."

Calling unicom from the air and asking for the active is not exactly correct. As in the case of our accident airport, two runways were active. A proper call would be something like this, "XYZ unicom, N1234 would like an airport advisory." Unicom operators, remember, are just giving advisories, not active runways.

There have been cases where pilots on IFR flight plans have acknowledged ATC clearances by just saying "Roger," when, in fact, they either did not fully understand ATC or misunderstood the clearance. The pilots did what they thought ATC said or meant. However, it was not what ATC wanted!

Enforcement action may be taken in the way of fines or a suspended or even a revoked certificate. It is recommended in the AIM that pilots read back all parts of an ATC clearance

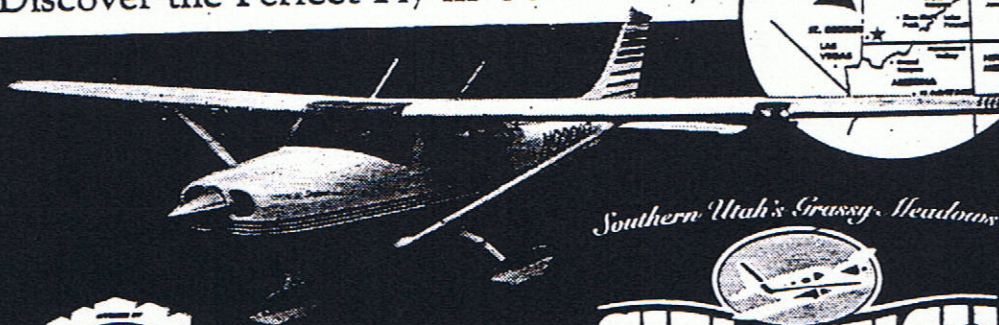
that are vital, like headings, altitude, frequency changes, and approach clearances. Doing this may save you from enforcement action and costly lawyer fees. If you are ever uncertain about anything in an ATC clearance, ask for clarification.

We can learn from this accident that proper use of the radio can be very important. Just as important as having enough fuel! An hour or two on the ground with a competent instructor, reviewing communication procedures will be time well spent. You can supplement this lesson by just listening to a CTAF for a while on the ground with your CFI and reviewing any mistakes you hear.

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