Proper Radio Communication Is Crucial

By: Harry Kraemer

Many pilots these days do not seem to be concerned with proper radio phraseology and techniques. I have even heard some use CTAFs like a CB radio. The first two sentences in the AIM under *Section 2. Radio Communications Phraseology and Techniques* remind us that radio communications are a critical link in the ATC system. But, that link can be quickly broken with disastrous results. Consider, for example, an accident that may have been avoided if all pilots involved had used proper radio communications.

This accident happened at UIN (Quincy, IL). It was between 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 taking off on runway 4. The third airplane (a Cherokee) was holding short of runway 4. The King Air taxied to runway 4 and made an announcement on the CTAF that they were holding short and were going to take off soon. The Beech 190C made several calls on the CTAF and asked the King Air if they were going to hold or take off. The Cherokee who was holding short on runway 4 behind the King Air responded (not using his aircraft type) that they were holding for departure on runway 4. The King Air had started his takeoff roll. Paragraph a.3.under *Aircraft Call Signs* reads (Civil aircraft pilots should state the aircraft type, model or manufacturer's name, followed by the digits/letters of the registration number). The Beech 1900C continued the approach. The Beech 1900 mistook the Cherokee's radio transmission for the King Air. The two aircraft collided at the intersection of runway 13 and 4. Had the Cherokee responded with his type and tail number the Beech 1900 might not have continued or 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 properly monitor and transmit on the CTAF before starting their takeoff roll. CTAF is an acronym for *Common Traffic Advisory Frequency*. This is used for the purpose of carrying 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.)* reads (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 FAR's or local procedures require otherwise). The NTSB report does not mention the King Air making any reports other than that they were holding short.

This brings to mind a term that you hear many times on CTAFs 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 runway or runways are in use without adding to all of 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 control which runway you have just cleared (*XYZ ground, this is Citation 1234 with you off of runway 35 to the general aviation ramp*). If we look back at this accident, had the King Air said that he was departing on the active, the Beech 1900 still would not have known where he was. If you were departing a runway, a proper announcement on the CTAF 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

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runways were active. A proper call would be something like this: *XYZ Unicom, N1234 would like an airport advisory.* Unicom operators, remember you 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", and they 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 in the way of fines, certificate suspension, and even revocation can be taken. 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. Always doing this may save you from enforcement action and costly lawyer fees. If you are ever not sure about anything in an ATC clearance, ask for clarification.

We can see by this that proper use of the radio can be very important. Just like 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 while on the ground for a while with your CFI and reviewing any mistakes you hear. •

Development Study Gets Underway

Delta Airport Consultants has been retained to update the 1989 Airport Layout Plan, or ALP, for the airpark. An ALP is primarily a blueprint for future development highlighting improvements that are both technically feasible and affordable.

In the case of the airpark, this means, for example, that emphasis will be placed on improvements to the terminal area and less on the need for runway extensions or other capacity-enhancing projects. This is because the airpark site is physically constrained, and the cost of property acquisition could be prohibitive.

As part of an eight-step process, survey work began in November 2000. Other work will cover forecast of aviation demand, alternative concepts for development, and preparation of a 5-year capital improvement program.

The study is not without controversy. A number of citizens have expressed concern about future airpark development. "Lately, I keep hearing about lengthening the runway", says Ann Swain, a member of the Airpark Liaison Committee. "If that is one of the recommendations, I'll fight it."

To address concerns and keep citizens informed, an ALP advisory committee has been created. Members include representatives from airport management, airport users, county government, and citizen groups.

Work of the study will be finished in late April. •

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tion organizations, there appeared to be little progress on the waiver request to the FAA. That's when McNeeley called in the cavalry.

"Congresswoman Morella had been instrumental in securing $1.9 million in federal grants to rebuild our runway in 1997," said McNeeley. "I came to the realization this latest challenge could only be resolved with her help."

From McNeeley's initial letter of August 16, 2000, Congresswoman Morella's office labored for five months to press the case to FAA officials, including FAA Administrator Jane Garvey. The waiver was finally granted on January 11, 2001.

The waiver is effective for three years. This will give airport officials time to determine a long-term solution to the obstruction problem. Options at this point appear to be purchase of adjacent property and removal of the obstructions, or relocation of the runway 700 feet to the north. It's believed that either option would be eligible for FAA financial participation.

Reaction to the waiver from airport users has been positive and swift. "The threshold displacement was impacting our business," says Monty Lilley, president of Congressional Air Charters. "Some of the other charter companies we partner with refused to use the airpark with the displacement. We're pleased things are back to normal."

"Kudos to Connie Morella and her staff for taking time to meet the needs of her constituents," commented Scott Silverman, president of the Inn Flying Club. "Airpark users supported her in the past and will continue to support her."

Work to repaint and relight Runway 32 was completed on February 9, 2001. •