AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL FREQUENCY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

WARNING

Information contained in this document is intended for flight simulation purposes only.

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1 Control Pages

1.1 Document Identification

Document Identification	
Type	Policy
Version	1.2
Issue Date	01 SEP 2025
Identification	VATSIM-POL-ATC Frequency and Information Management

1.2 Revision Records

Version Number	Date	Description of Change	Author
1.0	01 DEC 2020	Initial Release	BoG
1.1	21 OCT 2023	Updated to accommodate multiple ATISs, incorporated minor grammatical and format updates	BoG
1.2	01 SEP 2025	Updated to clarify Controller Information requirements	BoG

1.3 Related Documents

Document Name	Document Identification

2 Purpose

This policy defines and authorizes the use of primary and secondary (multiple) frequencies for air traffic controllers on the VATSIM network whilst using the Audio for VATSIM (AFV) voice technology. In addition, this policy outlines the requirements and allowances for air traffic controllers who choose to maintain an automated terminal information system (ATIS) broadcast and the controller information section within ATC radar clients.

The intent of this policy is to allow pilots and air traffic controllers to take advantage of more advanced capabilities of the Audio for VATSIM technology within reasonable and practical limits as to not overload individual air traffic controllers or cause confusion for pilots.

3 Applicability

This policy applies to:

- All Air Traffic Control Specialists (ATCS) (also known as Air Traffic Controllers).

4 Definitions

Air Traffic Control Specialist: A VATSIM member with an Air Traffic Control Rating who is providing Air Traffic Control Services on the VATSIM Network.

Area: A grouping of sectors within a local facility that are within a similar geographic area.

Automated Terminal Information Service (ATIS): The automatic provision of current, routine information to arriving and departing aircraft at a specific aerodrome.

Lateral Air Traffic Control: Primarily for Enroute / Center operations, a method of providing air traffic control services for multiple lateral splits and in some cases multiple facilities.

Lateral Split: A predefined geographical area utilizing a discrete frequency for providing Air Traffic Control services. Normally used for workload management or transceiver range. Lateral splits are defined and activated in accordance with local policy.

Local Facility: The smallest administrative unit on the VATSIM network responsible for developing local policy, procedure, training of Air Traffic Control Specialists, and provision of Air Traffic Control Services for an airspace assigned by the division. Also known as a subdivision.

Overlying Controller: A VATSIM Air Traffic Control Specialist who is online and providing Air Traffic Control Services for a position above a user's control position in the top-down vertical structure.

> Example: An online Approach / Departure controller is an overlying controller to an online Local (Tower) controller.

Primary Frequency: The radio frequency an Air Traffic Controller designates as primary in his or her radar client that will populate in the Air Traffic Controllers list on pilot clients and other ATCS' radar clients.

Secondary Frequency: Any other frequency that an individual Air Traffic Controller utilizes while controlling on the VATSIM network. Secondary frequencies do not populate in the Air Traffic Controllers list on pilot clients and other ATCS' clients.

Sector: A single airspace with predefined lateral and vertical boundaries for providing Air Traffic Control Services.

Top-Down Air Traffic Control: VATSIM's method of providing Air Traffic Control Services for positions that are below an air traffic control position in the vertical structure. (Enroute / Center -> Approach / Departure / TMA -> Local (Tower) Control -> Ground Control -> Clearance Delivery / Ramp Control. An online ATCS is responsible for providing air traffic control services for all offline positions that are below them in this hierarchy in accordance with local procedures.

Underlying Controller: A VATSIM Air Traffic Control Specialist who is online and providing Air Traffic Control Services for a position under a user's control position in the top-down vertical structure.

> Example: An online ground controller is an underlying controller to an online Local (Tower) controller.

Vertical Split: A predefined area of airspace defined by an altitude floor and an altitude ceiling utilizing a discrete frequency used for providing air traffic control services. Vertical splits are defined and activated in accordance with local procedures.

5 Policy

5.1 Primary Frequency Use

5.1.1 A VATSIM ATCS may only designate one primary frequency for providing air traffic control services.

5.1.2 The primary frequency the ATCS designates will be determined by local procedures.

5.2 Secondary Frequency Use

5.2.1 A VATSIM ATCS may, at their discretion, and in accordance with local policy, provide air traffic control services on a limited number of discrete secondary frequencies subject to the following restrictions:

5.2.1.1 The secondary frequencies must be used for lateral air traffic control.

5.2.1.2 The number of secondary frequencies allowed may not exceed the number of authorized lateral area splits as defined by local policy.

5.2.1.3 The secondary frequencies must be needed to provide adequate communication reception based on the Audio for VATSIM Transceiver Database when not utilizing cross-coupling.

5.2.1.4 The secondary frequencies available for use must be defined both in local policy for ATCS as well as published in an easily accessible and readable format by local facilities for pilot use.

5.2.1.5 The use of secondary frequencies is restricted to lateral splits of Enroute / Center control and Approach / Departure / TMA.

5.2.1.6 An ATCS utilizing secondary frequencies may request a pilot change to his secondary frequency if contacted on his or her primary frequency but must provide air traffic control services to a pilot on his or her primary frequency if the pilot refuses or is unable and communications are adequate.

> Example: An ATCS on an Enroute / Center position may at his discretion, and in accordance with local policy, operate secondary frequencies for each area of his total airspace.
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> Example: An ATCS on an Approach / Departure position may at his discretion and in accordance with local policy operate a secondary frequency for departure control or area in cases of large, consolidated Approach / Departure facilities. For instance, Potomac Approach: Shenandoah Area and Potomac Approach: Chesapeake Area may be operated on secondary frequencies.
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> Example: An ATCS working multiple large sectors, primarily within the Asia / Pacific Region, may operate a secondary frequency for each additional large sector as defined by local policy.

5.2.2 A VATSIM ATCS may not provide top-down air traffic control services utilizing secondary frequencies except in the following circumstances and in accordance with local policy:

5.2.2.1 The ATCS is providing temporary relief for an underlying controller with a designated primary frequency.

5.2.2.2 The ATCS is moving traffic to the appropriate frequency for an oncoming underlying controller. The oncoming controller must be connected to the network on with an unprimed frequency (199.998) with the intention of assuming responsibility for the position within 10 minutes.

5.2.2.3 The ATCS is finishing working the traffic on an outgoing underlying controller's frequency. The overlying controller may provide top-down service for all aircraft assigned an underlying controller's frequency upon termination of the underlying controllers ATC session. No new aircraft may be assigned the underlying controller's frequency. An online Enroute / Center controller may not provide air traffic control services on a secondary frequency for an offline Approach / Departure, Local (Tower), Ground, or Clearance Delivery position, unless one of the temporary exceptions listed above is met.

5.2.3 Under no circumstance may a region, division, local facility, or pilot mandate an individual ATCS utilize secondary frequencies.

5.3 Automated Terminal Information Service (ATIS)

5.3.1 An ATCS may make up to four additional connections to the VATSIM Network to provide a Voice ATIS at an aerodrome they control which has an ATIS in real life.

5.3.1.1 There must be an accompanying text version which shall always be in English.

5.3.1.2 The aerodromes chosen should be the primary airports for which the ATCS has responsibility, but may be changed at the ATCS' discretion based upon

- Local policy providing a hierarchy of which aerodromes are provided with an ATIS, with such policy considering which aerodromes would be most beneficial to providing the best service to pilots.
- An underlying or overlying controller already providing an ATIS for the primary airport.
- Enhanced traffic levels at a non-primary airport resulting in better service for pilots at the non-primary airport.
- Any other reason the ATCS determines need for an ATIS at the non-primary airport
- Under no circumstance may an ATCS signed on as a Local (Tower), Ground, or Clearance Delivery position provide an ATIS for any aerodrome other than their primary aerodrome.
- Ground or Clearance Delivery positions shall not assign an active runway or active approach in their ATIS unless coordinated with an online overlying ATCS who has operational control over the aerodrome.

5.3.2 The ATIS Shall be formatted as follows:

5.3.2.1 ATIS information must contain aerodrome name or identifier, ATIS information letter, observation time, weather, active runway, expected approach type and appropriate aviation-safety related operational information.

5.3.2.2 ATCS are asked to refrain from including operational information that is not applicable or cannot be effectively implemented in the VATSIM environment.

5.3.2.3 Controllers should attempt to limit the ATIS Information to as few lines as possible.

5.4 Controller Information

5.4.1 The first line of Controller Information contains network information that is either automatically inserted by the ATC software or manually entered by the controller.

5.4.2 Beyond the one line of network information, an ATCS may add not more than 4 additional lines of information, each not more than 76 characters in length.

5.4.3 Local Facilities may mandate certain information be included per local policy that do not conflict with this policy.

5.4.4 Controller Information shall only contain information necessary for ATC operations and relevant to pilots or ATC.

5.4.5 Controller Information shall be formatted as follows:

5.4.5.1 Controller information shall be in English, but may also include a copy in the local language.

5.4.5.2 Examples of appropriate controller information include:

- Aerodromes covered by the control position
- Expected Logoff Time
- Hyperlink to ATC Sector Split and Frequency Map
- Hyperlink to local facility websites for pilot information or controller feedback
- Hyperlink to ATCS' personal live stream

Note: Inclusion of such a hyperlink makes the entire stream/recorded session including informal mediums such as a stream chat subject to the VATSIM Code of Conduct.

5.4.6 Information that is not permitted to be included in the Controller Information includes: Controller's name, personal information, rating, raw METAR data that has not been decoded and/or any other information that is not specifically required to conduct ATC on VATSIM.