

AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION CIRCULAR 11/20

VISUAL APPROACH EXPECTATIONS

(Replaces AIC 29/19)

Purpose of the Circular

This circular is to provide clarity to both pilots and air traffic services (ATS) on visual approach procedures to harmonize expectations.

Background

The use of visual approaches can increase airport throughput and capacity, and permits aircraft to manage their lateral and vertical flight profiles to the runway.

The following aligns NAV CANADA direction to air traffic controllers (ATC) and *Transport Canada Aeronautical Information Manual* (TC AIM – TP14371E) guidance information pertaining to visual approaches. Existing guidance is clear except for navigation to final and missed approach expectations. The following information provides further guidance and considerations regarding visual approach and missed approach expectations.

Weather

When the ceiling is at least 500 feet above the minimum instrument flight rules (IFR) altitude and visibility is 3 statute miles (SM) or greater, ATC may issue a visual approach clearance.

Navigation to Final

Pilots may anticipate the following methods for visual approach clearances:

- ATC will inform the pilot of the airport or preceding aircraft's position in preparation for a visual approach. The visual approach clearance will be issued following the pilot's confirmation of visual contact with the airport **or** preceding traffic as applicable. If the visual approach clearance includes an instruction to follow the sighted traffic ahead, the pilot will be responsible for wake turbulence separation.
- ATC will issue a visual approach clearance and, as required, supplement with additional instructions such as:
 - Heading assignment:
 - To ensure the aircraft stays separated from preceding or succeeding traffic. ATC will consider the aircraft's altitude and remaining distance to the airport when using this technique.
 - To comply with parallel runway operation rules that require a 30-degree intercept heading to final prior to issuing the visual approach clearance.
 - Final intercept distance and/or altitude to establish separation from traffic under the control tower's responsibility using references to:
 - Published navigational aid (NAVAID)/fix/waypoint;
 - Distance from the runway; and
 - Prominent landmark on the final approach course.

ATC may anticipate pilots to navigate to the final approach course by using the following methods depending on the aircraft's altitude and distance from the airport:

- Fly the shortest distance to the airport while complying with ATC and noise abatement restrictions; or
- Use the onboard navigation guidance to follow a lateral profile reflecting any remaining portion of the standard terminal arrival (STAR) and the previously planned published instrument approach procedure. This provides the following benefits:
 - Enhanced aircraft energy management;
 - Predictability;
 - Reduced flight deck workload;
 - Flexibility in meeting stabilized approach criteria; and
 - Adherence to altitude restrictions during nighttime conditions.

As both methods differ in terms of flying distance, it is good airmanship for pilots to advise ATC of the planned flight path, especially if it is likely to be unexpected or unpredictable, such as the widening of the base leg or the inability to shorten the flying distance as anticipated by ATC.

Missed Approach

Pilots should anticipate ATC to issue missed approach instructions when a pilot initiates a go-around. It is understood that the execution of a missed approach maneuver involves critical internal flight deck communications and high pilot workload. If required for planning, pilots may request these instructions in advance of the approach clearance or any time prior to initiating the missed approach. ATC instructions will guide the pilot to:

- Continue flying the issued IFR clearance; or
- Integrate into the airport visual flight rules (VFR) circuit.

Until missed approach instructions are issued, **ATC** should anticipate pilots conducting a go-around from a visual approach to:

- Initially fly runway heading;
- Follow the published missed approach instructions of the instrument approach procedure requested by the pilots and acknowledge by ATC; or
- Follow the published missed approach instructions of the instrument approach procedure advertised on the automatic terminal information service (ATIS).

Other considerations

- A visual approach is an IFR approach when the aircraft is on an IFR flight plan.
- When cleared for an instrument approach procedure, regardless of the visibility or cloud conditions, at no time does the approach revert to a "visual approach" without a specific ATC clearance.

Further Information

For further information, please contact:

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