

Flight Service Stations

There is a little mystery as to the best way to access a flight service station while flying en-route.

Services Provided

- Weather information: Local and enroute
- Pilot Reports (PIREPS)
- Flight Plans - Filing, changing, closing
- Airport Advisories
- Airport Information
- Status of MOAs and Restricted areas
- NOTAMS

Contacting an FSS over the phone

Flight Service stations are serviced a single phone number throughout the continental United States: 1-800-WX-BRIEF. Use this phone number to access any of the services that an FSS provides.

One hint here though. If you are using a cellular phone that is located in a different calling area, you will pick up the FSS for that particular calling area and not necessarily where you are physically located during the call. For example; my phone has an area code of 408. If I am in Livermore California, which has an area code of 925 and I dial 1-800-WX-BRIEF from my cellular phone, I will pick up the FSS used to service Livermore California. Local phones are your best bet when calling an FSS.

Contacting an FSS En-Route

- Sectional charts can be used to find the FSS frequency needed depending on where you are during your flight. The following frequencies will NEVER be found on a sectional chart:
 - 121.5: Flight emergencies
 - 122.0: Enroute Flight Advisory Service (EFAS)
 - 122.2: Routine communications with a FSS
- On your sectional charts, you will find RCO (Remove Communication Outlet) frequencies that let you communicate with the FSS
- Also on your sectional chart, you will find VOR frequencies which can communicate with the FSS.

The procedure for contacting an FSS during the en-route portion of your flight can be confusing, so let's set some possible rules:

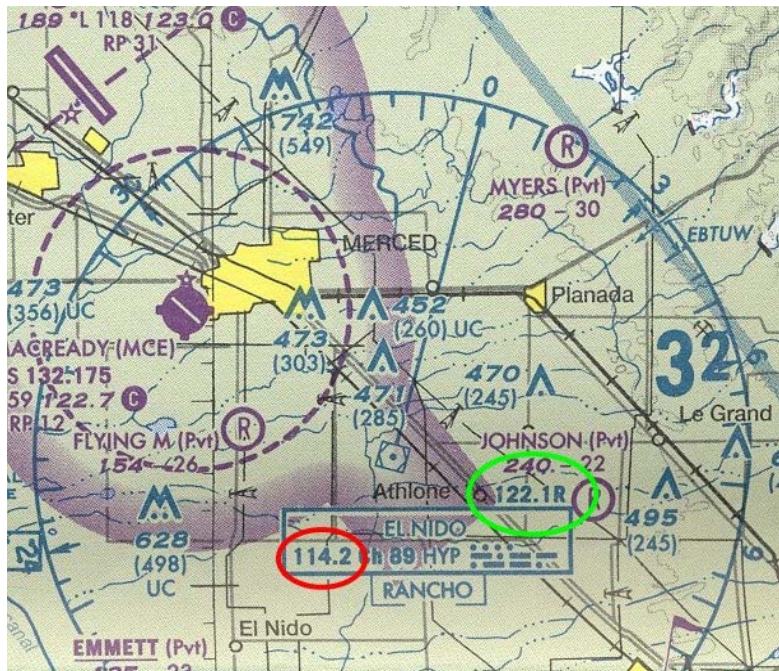
1. On your sectional chart, the FSS will be indicated by a dark-bordered box. As shown below, the Rancho Murieta FSS is located at the Rancho Murieta airport (KRIU). Frequencies for this FSS are not shown on the chart since it uses the standard frequencies of 121.5 (remember, just for emergencies), 122.2, 243.0 and 255.4. If there were other frequencies used at this FSS, they would be noted above the dark-bordered box.



2. Try 122.2. If the frequency is too congested or you get no response, try step #3
3. On your sectional chart, look for an RCO (Remote Communication Outlet) figure. The one shown below is an RCO for Rancho Murieta's flight service station named Angels Camp. The frequency for this RCO is 122.3 which will get you to the Rancho FSS.



4. If you can't find an RCO near your flight path, check the VOR stations identified near your position. As shown below, the El Nido VOR shows a frequency at the top right of the VOR box - 122.1R (Circled in green). 122.1 is the frequency that the Rancho FSS can receive on at this location (thus the 'R' at the end of the 122.1), so you can transmit using this frequency. Also notice the 114.2 frequency (Circled in red) which is NOT underlined. This frequency is normally used on your NAV radio for VOR navigation, but it also can be used to listen (it HAS voice capabilities since it is not underlined) to the FSS. If this frequency was underlined, you could NOT use it to listen to the FSS. So, with that said, you can dial in your Com-1 to 122.1 to transmit to the FSS, and listen to the VOR frequency 114.2 on your NAV-1 for their response to your transmission's).



Opening a Flight Plan by Radio

- If the FSS is on the airport premises (like at Rancho Murieta - KRIU):
 1. Notify the current service monitoring your movements (ground or tower) that you wish to contact the FSS. After the current controller hands you off:
 2. Dial in the frequency specified for the FSS or 122.0 if none is specified.
 3. Contact the FSS (something like: "Rancho Murieta Radio, **Nxxxxx** on 122.2, Rancho Murieta")
 4. If you are calling while still on the ground:
 - After they they acknowledge your call: "Radio, **Nxxxxx** request that you open my flight plan to *destination* at **take-off time**"

5. If you are calling while in the air:
 1. After they they acknowledge your call: "Radio, **Nxxxxx** request that my VFR flight plan be opened to *destination*. I am currently located at *position/altitude*"
 6. The FSS will probably give you some information, let you know that your flight plan is open, and will ask you to give pilot reports when appropriate.
- If the FSS is not on the airport premises but an RCO is:
 1. Notify the current service monitoring your movements (ground, tower or ATC) that you wish to contact the FSS. After the controller hands you off:
 2. Dial in the appropriate frequency as specified for the RCO and make your request to that FSS (don't use the RCO name, use the FSS name).
 3. "Rancho Murieta Radio, **Nxxxxx** on 122.2, Rancho Murieta")
 4. If you are calling while still on the ground:
 - After they they acknowledge your call: "Radio, **Nxxxxx** request that you open my flight plan to *destination* at **take-off time**"
 5. If you are calling while in the air:
 - After they they acknowledge your call: "Radio, **Nxxxxx** request that my VFR flight plan be opened to **destination**. I am currently located at *position/altitude*"
 6. The FSS will probably give you some information, let you know that your flight plan is open, and will ask you to give pilot reports when appropriate.
 - If the FSS is only accessible via a VOR in your area:
 1. Notify the current service monitoring your movements (ground, tower pr ATC) that you wish to contact the FSS. After the controller hands you off:
 2. Dial in the appropriate frequency on your COM (example: 121.1R) as specified on the VOR identity 'box' and also dial in the VOR's frequency in your NAV radio. Make sure you have the NAV radio activated on your communication switch to hear its transmissions
 3. Contact the FSS (something like: "Rancho Murieta Radio, **Nxxxxx** on 122.1 listening on 114.2, Rancho Murieta")
 4. If you are calling while in the air:
 - After they they acknowledge your call: "Radio, **Nxxxxx** request that my VFR flight plan be opened to **destination**. I am currently located at *position/altitude*"
 5. The FSS will probably give you some information, let you know that your flight plan is open, and will ask you to give pilot reports when appropriate.

Closing a Flight Plan by Radio

1. Identify the nearest FSS frequency using the procedures discussed above to Contact an [FSS en-Route](#)
2. Identify yourself and request that your flight plan be closed
 - "Rancho Murieta Radio, **Nxxxxx** on 122.1 listening on 114.2, Rancho Murieta" (on/listening only needed if you are using a VOR frequency to communicate with the FSS)
 - Once you get an acknowledgement back...
 - "Rancho Murieta Radio, **Nxxxxx** request VFR flight plan be closed, Rancho Murieta"
 - They will close your flight plan and possibly give you more information if you are still in the air.

Obtaining En-Route Weather Information

EFAS or Flight Watch is a service which can be used to get the most current weather conditions along your route of flight. Some items you should be aware of when trying to contact Flight Watch:

- Contacting Flight Watch
 - Not all FSS's offer the flight watch service. Check the inside of the back cover of the appropriate AFD to determine which ones do supply EFAS.
 - RCO's (Remote Communication Outlets) can be used to contact an FSS that may be out of range depending on your position to it. Verify that the intended FSS does have EFAS capabilities, then contact them via that RCO
 - If no FSS or RCO that supplies EFAS is within communication range, Dial in 122.0 in your COM radio and call for 'Flight Watch' instead of a particular FSS.

- Flight Watch Notes
 - You should normally be between 5,000 feet AGL and 17,500 feet MSL to contact flight watch
- Example radio exchange
 - Assuming your aircraft is near the Angels Camp RCO
 - Dial in 122.3 in your COM radio
 - **Pilot:** "Rancho Marieta Flight Watch, Cessna 21483"
 - **Flight Watch:** "Cessna 21483, Rancho Marieta Flight Watch"
 - **Pilot:** "Rancho Marieta Flight Watch, Cessna 21483 is over Linden VOR at seven thousand five hundred feet, VFR to Las Vegas. Request en-route weather advisories."
 - **Flight Watch:** *en-route weather reported*
 - **Pilot:** "Enroute weather received, Flight Watch. Thank you. Cessna 21483"

Submitting Pilot Reports (PIREPS)

Pilot Reports are the most accurate indication of weather conditions possible. Pilots that encounter weather that is unexpected or not forecasted should contact Flight Watch and report such weather. Normally, what types of weather will include:

- Icing
- Turbulence (clear air and normal)
- Wind shear
- Thunderstorms
- Obstacles
- Precipitation

You normally submit pilot reports to Flight Watch, but they can also be made to a FSS, Control Tower or the local unicom if no tower is present.

Following is the information that you need to have ready before submitting a pilot report:

- Type of aircraft
- Location
- Time (UTC)
- Reported conditions
- In/Out of clouds
- Altitude
- Duration of the conditions being reported