

Helicopters

Helicopters operate under **Visual Flight Rules (VFR)** and, in some cases, **Instrument Flight Rules (IFR)**, though IFR operations are less common. While they follow many of the same procedures as fixed-wing aircraft, there are key differences due to their ability to hover, air-taxi, and land at non-airport locations.

Controller Responsibilities for Helicopter Operations

- **VFR Arrivals/Departures:** Handled similarly to fixed-wing aircraft.
- **Traffic Patterns & Practice Approaches:** Managed with consideration for helicopter-specific maneuvering capabilities.
- **Operational Flexibility:** Helicopters may request direct routing, off-field landings, and alternative taxi procedures.

Helicopter Callsigns

Helicopter callsigns vary based on their operator and purpose:

- **Private & Corporate Flights:** Use standard registration callsigns.
- **Rescue Helicopters:** Use specialized callsigns and may add "RESCUE" when operating on a priority mission.
- **Police Helicopters:** Use law enforcement identifiers.

Ground Movements & Air-Taxiing

Unlike fixed-wing aircraft, most helicopters do not taxi conventionally. Instead, they **air-taxi** at approximately **3 meters (10 feet) AGL**.

- **Controllers should issue "air-taxi" clearances** instead of standard taxi instructions.
- Some helicopters have wheels and may perform limited ground taxiing.
- Helicopters can **depart from intersections, helipads, or designated airport positions**, subject to clearance.

Example Phraseology

Scenario	French	English
Request for Air-Taxi	Tour, F-HABC, demande de déplacement en vol stationnaire	Tower, F-HABC, request air-taxi

Scenario	French	English
Air-Taxi Clearance	F-HABC, tour, déplacement en vol stationnaire vers le point d'attente piste 18 intersection S via Y7, Y5 et S, rappelez prêt au départ.	F-HABC, Tower, air-taxi to holding point runway 18 intersection S via Y7, Y5, and S, report ready.

Helicopter Takeoff & Landing Procedures

Helipad Takeoff & Landing

Scenario	French	English
Cleared for Takeoff from a Helipad	F-HABC, vent 210 degrés, 5 nœuds, autorisé au décollage depuis l'hélipad.	F-HABC, wind 210 degrees, 5 knots, cleared for takeoff from helipad.
Cleared to Land at a Helipad	F-HABC, vent 210 degrés, 5 nœuds, autorisé à l'atterrissage sur l'hélipad.	F-HABC, wind 210 degrees, 5 knots, cleared to land helipad.

Runway Takeoff & Landing Considerations

- Helicopters may depart **vertically** or use **rolling takeoff techniques**.
- They may land on **designated helicopter landing sites** or a **runway**, subject to clearance.
- **Standard runway separation applies** to helicopters using runways.

CTR Crossing & Direct Routing Requests

Helicopters often request **direct routes** or **control zone (CTR) crossings** due to their operational flexibility.

Example Phraseology

Scenario	French	English
Request for CTR Crossing	Tour, F-HABC, demande traversée du CTR pour destination Lyon.	Tower, F-HABC, request to cross CTR en route to Lyon.
CTR Crossing Approval	F-HABC, QNH 1006, pistes en service 25 et 18, traversez comme demandé.	F-HABC, QNH 1006, runways 25 and 18, proceed as requested.
Traffic Advisory	F-HABC, trafic, Boeing 737 en finale 3 NM piste 25L, signalez en vue.	F-HABC, traffic, Boeing 737 on 3-mile final runway 25L, report traffic in sight.
Crossing Instruction	F-HABC, croisez derrière le trafic mentionné au sud, attention aux turbulences de sillage.	F-HABC, cross behind mentioned traffic to the south, caution wake turbulence.

Off-Airport Landings & Takeoffs

General Considerations

- Helicopters may request **off-airport landings** for **rescue, police, or private operations**.
- Controllers **do not issue landing/takeoff clearances** for off-field operations but provide flight following if necessary.

Example Phraseology

Scenario	French	English
Off-Field Landing Request	<i>F-HABC, approche de l'hôpital, demande de quitter la fréquence.</i>	<i>F-HABC, approaching hospital, request to leave frequency.</i>
Frequency Change Approval	<i>F-HABC, (vent 210 degrés, 17 nœuds), fréquence quittée approuvée, rappelez avant de redécoller.*</i>	<i>F-HABC, (wind 210 degrees, 17 knots), approved to leave frequency, report prior airborne again.*</i>

Scenario	French	English
Off-Field Takeoff Request	<i>Tour, F-HABC, à nouveau en vol à Casablanca, demande route directe vers l'hôpital.</i>	<i>Tower, F-HABC, airborne again at Casablanca, request direct route to hospital.</i>
Routing Approval	<i>F-HABC, QNH 1006, pistes en service 25 et 18, poursuivez comme demandé.</i>	<i>F-HABC, QNH 1006, runways 25 and 18, proceed as requested.</i>

Priority Missions & ATC Considerations

Helicopters engaged in **medical, law enforcement, or emergency response** flights may request priority handling. While **ATC should accommodate direct routing requests when feasible**, priority cannot be **demande**d under standard procedures.

- **Emergency flights** may require direct routing through airport approach paths.
- **Holding or delay vectors** may be issued if required for traffic sequencing.
- **Coordination with pilots** ensures efficient integration into controlled airspace.

“ **Note:** On VATSIM, per the Code of Conduct, no flight has an automatic right to priority. Controllers may accommodate priority requests but are not obligated to do so if it disrupts other operations.