

A great VFR flight plan!

Flight plans are an important resource in air traffic control. With today's applications they can be produced and filed quickly. Apart from flights subject to a mandatory flight plan (flights across national frontiers, night-time VFR, sections of flights with IFR or flights from/to LSGG or LSZH), the FOCA recommends that flight plans be filed for flights in the areas of the Jura or the Alps. Flight plans are one of, if not the, most important source of information in the event of a Search & Rescue operation.

Flight plans must provide information about the type of aircraft, the colour of the aircraft, the intended route, the departure point and destination including the envisaged take-off time and the calculated flight duration. Few people are aware of the importance of flight plan data for the Search and Rescue service (SAR).

The important elements of a flight plan are described in this information leaflet. Flight plans become active at the EOBT. Even without your activation!

The information in a **VFR flight plan** which is important for SAR is given below.

Field 13: The planned time of departure **(EOBT)**. Flight plans become active automatically at this point in time. Your activation of the flight plan using your current take-off time updates the times. If the EOBT is no longer appropriate, you should update this after **30 minutes** by means of **DLA, CHG**. If the flight does not take place, please cancel the FPL (CNL).

On field 15: Route. If, for example, a route with "Bellinzona DCT St. Gallen" is shown for a VFR flight from LSZL to LSZR, this results in many possibilities for a flight route. Looking for such a flight is essentially like searching for a needle in a haystack. Please specify the route with salient points which are a maximum of 30 minutes apart. And one other request: please then do actually follow the route. You can make changes to the route before the flight using CHG or amend the flight plan during the flight using FIC ...including your new EET; field 16: The total flight duration (EET). This is obtained from the speed and the length of the route. The EET is an important parameter! As mentioned above, all flight plans become active at the EOBT and are actively monitored.

The monitoring procedure calculates the time of departure EOBT, the EET and a buffer of 30 minutes. If the flight plan has not been cancelled, delayed or closed by then, INCERFA is activated.

Field 18 should contain the mobile phone numbers preferably of all persons on board **(POB)**. If an ELT is not activated, mobile telephones are nowadays very useful in a search operation. The Swiss SAR has special methods of locating mobile telephones quickly. Please do not switch a mobile to flight mode and always keep it on your body... But why in field 18? Up to and including field 18, the flight plan data are always passed on to air traffic control. Information **from field 18 onwards** must first be "ordered" from the AIS at the departure aerodrome – which is often in a different country. This can take up valuable time.

The aircraft's total fuel time (endurance) is entered in **field 19 E/.** This is another very important item of information for SAR. If the endurance has expired and the flight plan has not been closed by then, **DETRESFA** is activated! **This is the highest alert level.** So this information must always be correct.

Field 19 P/ gives information on the number of persons on board (POB). This number is of great relevance. Establishing the correct number of persons during a rescue operation, so that nobody at the site of the accident is forgotten, is fundamental. People are not always responsive after an accident. If the number of POB changes, **it must be amended before departure** (CHG).

Accurate information in **field A/** helps to locate the aircraft visually more quickly. Enter here all the characteristics of your aircraft such as markings and colour.

Every individual flight plan with a landing on an uncontrolled aerodrome (AIP ENR 1.10) <u>must</u> be <u>closed by the PIC</u>. The best thing is for you to make an entry in the checklist, in order to close the flight plan immediately after landing in Switzerland, using the free phone number **0800 437 837**. Note that flight plans (FPL) with a diversion are <u>in all cases</u> closed with a reference to the **diversion**.

For landings on **aerodromes abroad without ATC** always close the FPL using these numbers: