

24.3.1 AUTOMATED FLIGHT FOLLOWING (AFF) PROCEDURES

AFF reduces the requirement to “check in” via radio every 15 minutes, and provides the dispatcher with a wide range of information on the flight, airspace, and other data that may be pertinent to the flight. This reduces pilot workload, clears congested radio frequencies, and provides the dispatcher with much greater detail and accuracy on aircraft location and flight history.

A. Requirements to Utilize AFF:

1. Automated flight following does **NOT** reduce or eliminate the requirement for aircraft on mission flights to have FM radio capability, and for the aircraft to be monitoring appropriate radio frequencies during the flight.
2. Procedures for flight requests, ordering aircraft, requirement for a Flight Manager, etc., are the same as radio check-in procedures.
3. The aircraft must be equipped with the necessary hardware (transmitter and antenna).
4. The dispatch office responsible for the flight following must have a computer connected to the Internet immediately available to them in the dispatch office. Dispatch office(s) responsible for flight following shall be staffed for the duration of the flight.
5. Training: The flight following dispatcher must have a working knowledge of the automated flight following program (Webtracker) and must have a current username and password for the automated flight following system.

B. Procedures for Utilizing AFF:

1. When an aircraft is ordered, or a user requests flight following from a dispatch office, and the above listed requirements are met automated flight following shall be utilized.
2. The dispatch office will log on to the automated flight following web site, verify that the aircraft icon is visible on the screen, and be able to quickly monitor this page at any time during the flight.

3. The dispatch office will provide the pilot with FM frequencies and tones that will be monitored for the duration of the flight.
4. The pilot will relay the flight itinerary, ETD, ETA and fuel on board to the dispatch center.
5. When aircraft is initially airborne, and outside of sterile cockpit environment, the pilot will contact the dispatch office via radio stating "Nxxxx off (airport or helibase name), ATD, SOB, FOB and ETE on AFF". Dispatch office shall respond "Nxxxx, (dispatch call sign) AFF." This is required to positively verify that both the aircraft and the dispatch office are utilizing AFF, radios are operational, and that the dispatcher can "see" the aircraft on the computer screen. If there is a problem at this point, change to radio 15-minute check-in procedures until the problem is resolved.

If radio contact cannot be established the pilot will abort the mission and return to the airport/helibase.

6. If there is a deviation from the planned and briefed flight route, the pilot will contact the dispatch office via radio with the changed information.
7. The dispatch office will keep the AFF system running on a computer for the entire flight and will set a 15-minute timer and monitor the computer at a minimum and document, for the duration of the flight.
8. If the aircraft icon turns RED, it means the signal has been lost. Immediately attempt contact with the aircraft via radio and follow normal lost communication, missing aircraft, or downed aircraft procedures as appropriate. If radio contact is made after a lost signal, flight may continue utilizing 15-minute radio check-ins for flight following. (During tactical operations below 500' a periodic red indication is normal and does not necessitate an 'immediate' contact especially if flight following has been established with the incident. This should be addressed during the pre-flight briefing.)
9. When the aircraft has completed the flight and landed, the pilot or flight manager (passenger, observer, Flight Manager, ATGS, etc.) shall contact the dispatch office via radio or telephone informing them that they are on the ground.

10. If the flight will cross “traditional dispatch boundaries,” the originating dispatch office must coordinate with affected units, and establish if the aircraft will be flight followed for the duration of the flight from the originating office or handed off when the border is crossed. Either option is acceptable but must be communicated and understood between dispatch offices and pilots/flight managers.

Additional information about AFF can be found at:
<https://www.aff.gov/>

24.3.2 AFF and Tactical Flights

Use AFF to and from an incident, when agreed upon between dispatch and pilot, either by phone prior to take off or after sterile period en route to incident. Positive hand off to the incident is essential when the aircraft has made contact prior to entering the Fire Traffic Area of the incident.