

RADIO COMMUNICATION FOR GLIDER PILOTS

Historically, glider pilots have had minimal training in radio communication discipline. In most cases, it wasn't necessary and was a distraction from the flying. That is still the case at many gliderports. Monroe is a different situation by far.

At tower controlled airports, all is orderly or else. "Listen up and pay attention-do as you are told, and answer when called upon" is the order of business. At Monroe, we are on our own. So-listen up and pay attention!

First--"Listen!" Don't speak more than needed. 122.9 is a party line with other airports, and you can hear planes more than 100 miles away – worse yet, they can hear you. They don't always identify their intended recipient, but there are clues. If you hear someone on downwind for 36, you know it isn't Monroe! So, we are obliged to tie up the frequency for as little time as possible. Listen before transmitting. Many messages expect a reply, so wait a few seconds for it.

Next-- compose the message before pushing the PTT switch. There are several messages you can pre-record in your brain. Any word in the message not needed for clarity should be removed. Rehearse this until it is second nature. Always include "glider" (if it is). Always include name of airport at beginning and end of transmission. When talking to the FAA, include N-number, not comp ID. Practice your best James Earl Jones basso profundo for transmitting. Airplane speakers reproduce these deeper sounds with better clarity. Example--- "Monroe this here's Piper Cherokee N1234- I'm about 5 miles out and gonna land there-what's y'all's active?" becomes- "Monroe traffic, Piper 1234, 5 mi Northeast, landing Monroe".

Anyway, write out some scripts, then remove every word that does not contribute to clarity.

Next, Push the PTT, wait a second before speaking. When you push the PTT, a relay closes shutting off the audio amplifier, and turning on the transmit. Speaking too soon cuts off the addressee.

Then transmit your concise message, ending again with the addressee. Release the PTT! Some pilots actually hold down a while.

Position reports follow the IPA format---Identification, Position (range and direction from Monroe {or somewhere}), Altitude MSL. "Glider KiloFoxtrot, 5 mi Northwest Monroe, Five thousand Five hundred". Good reason to set altimeter to MSL.

Pattern reports---include airport; place in pattern I.e left downwind, right base; runway of intended landing; airport. Important-include which of the two downwinds you are using—left or right. Include landing intention—stopping midfield vs landing long vs landing short.

That about covers it—Think ahead, consider the usual scenarios, and generate a script for each. Be brief and clear.

Script for transitioning class D airspace:

If you are near a Class D, and there is a chance of entering it, then call the tower-be brief, include full FAA call sign. "Bartow Tower, Glider 808HF, 6 mi southwest, over". The tower will answer you--"Glider 8HF, go ahead". Then state your information and or request. If they use the last 3 characters of your call sign, you may respond with same. In my case it was "Glider 8HF at 2,500 ft, may need to enter Class D and land Bartow". Usual response would have been, "Glider 8HF cleared into Bartow Class D, keep us informed". But, they said, "Glider 8HF, remain clear Bartow class D". To which I replied, "Glider 8HF, unable". Tower said "8HF, are you declaring an emergency?". 8HF replied, "Not at this time, but I may have to if you don't clear me into Bartow class D". Whereupon the tower controller declared the emergency (now his paperwork, not mine). I did not find a thermal, fired up the engine and motored away, and called him when clear of the class D, which I had entered.

So---the word "unable" tells the FAA that you can't do whatever they are asking-no explanation needed. The "Not at this time but....." puts it on their back.