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FIL.2025-T15

OFF-AIRPORT OPERATIONS

July 2025

Dear owners, operators and Network members,

This Flight Information Letter provides guidelines about operating off-airport safely. This Flight Information Letter is not meant to replace instruction from a qualified and experienced flight instructor from any specific area of operations.

Off-airport operations are infrequent in current-day operations, pilots need to be aware of much higher risks than for airport operations. Therefore, the pilot should consider other options during flight planning and preparation.

Operating in and out of an unprepared runway is an opportunity to do some fun flying, but while paved runways are pretty much level, firm, and straight, unpaved ones come in all shapes and sizes. They may be sloping or tiered, convex or concave, have certain rough spots, with the condition of the landing surface usually changing throughout the year, and sometimes have close obstacles (tree, terrain, power lines) or even wildlife.

The golden rule in that kind of operation is that before you fly to that off-airport location, you must ensure that you will meet takeoff performance based on latest

surface conditions and density altitude at takeoff time from the same place. Gravel, grass, up-sloped runways combined with high density altitude, and your aircraft may not have the performance to takeoff within the runway length or clear terrain. Cooler mornings are the only viable option before the weather warms and the density altitude increases.

So, how familiar are you with your next off-airport destination? And more importantly, how familiar are you with local aerology, sensorial illusions, or navigating through high terrain without horizon references as shown in the above picture?

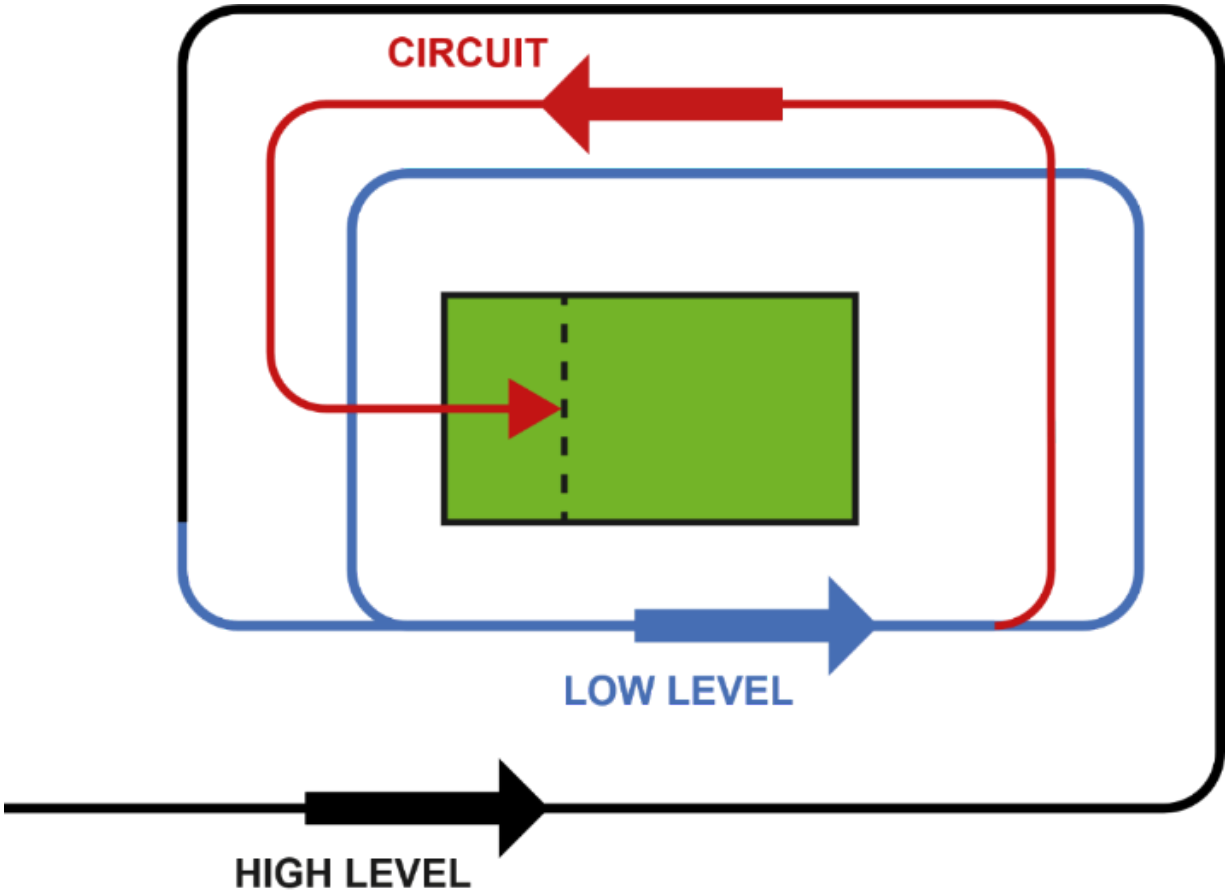
The first landing and takeoff should be made as a second in command with a pilot that has experience flying in and out, or as a pilot in command under the supervision of an experienced flight instructor. Off-airport flying activity isn't doable at all during certain months, this means retraining your off-airport skills must be considered prior to resuming that type of flying. Also, consideration should be given to no local QNH altimeter being available.

Every approach requires a stabilized approach that leads to a safe landing, so make sure to align the approach to the runway at the earliest possible, configure full flaps, and fly approach airspeed plus wind correction if required. In some off-airport locations, consider a point in space where there will be no room for a go-around once passed (go-around performance against runway up slope, obstacles on runway end).

Off-airport landing and takeoff require additional procedures and techniques.

Recon passes are necessary but require extreme vigilance as they have been sources of Controlled Flight Into Terrain events. They are to be performed at

high and low level at an angle to the landing surface, not above, and identify the touchdown zone. Pass after pass the pilot should be more and more comfortable with the landing site, if not, the pilot should select a most suitable landing site or fly back.



Soggy soils aren't easy to detect, and small watercourses or water patches should prevent the pilot from landing.

After touchdown, avoid excessive forward pressure on the nosewheel to prevent from "nose wheel digging".

At walkaround, the pilot should inspect for possible pebbles or gravels impacts on the aircraft, especially the propeller.

Before takeoff, the pilot should assess the entire runway length to identify potential hazards.

During takeoff roll, aft pressure on the yoke for lifting the nose wheel off the ground if needed.

Once airborne, clean up the airplane and fly the best angle of climb airspeed if there is an obstacle requirement.

Refer to the POH/AFM for:
- Short takeoff and landing procedures.
- Performances (takeoff and landing distances based on correction factors).

For additional information:

- AC No: 91-79B
- FAA Off Airport Ops Guide
- Airplane Flying Handbook (FAA-H-8083-3C) ch. 6 & 9
- Pilot's Handbook of aeronautical knowledge (FAA-H-8083-25) ch. 11
- RAF-ASI-Safety-Briefing-Guide.pdf
- AOPA Backcountry Resource Center - AOPA
- Tips for Landing in the Grass - AOPA

List of all Flight Information Letters issued as of today is available in Technical Documentation file on MyTBM.aero:

- FIL.2015-T1: Stabilized Approach Criteria
- FIL.2015-T2: TBM cabin pressure messages and warnings (Rev.1)
- FIL.2016-T3: Uncoordinated / Asymmetric Flight
- FIL.2017-T4: Ice contamination, speed, and flap awareness
- FIL.2019-T5: When turning the Autopilot ON
- FIL 2020-T6: Flight Control Trim
- FIL.2021-T7: Weight & Balance
- FIL.2022-T8: Inadvertent activation of the HomeSafe™
- FIL.2022-T9: Utilization of flaps
- FIL.2022-T10: Flight Control Trim System
- FIL.2022-T11: Emergency landing gear extension procedure
- FIL.2023-T12: Go-around
- FIL.2023-T13: Kodiak Bleed Air Heat Malfunctions
- FIL.2024-T14: Circling approaches

This letter is part of Flight Information communications transmitted to TBM and Kodiak pilots & operators, and focuses on specific flying tasks. It neither replaces nor overrides any POH or Pilot Guide which are the only official documentation. This letter is for information only.

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