FIRE on the NAT! Where to go in an emergency?

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22 January, 2025



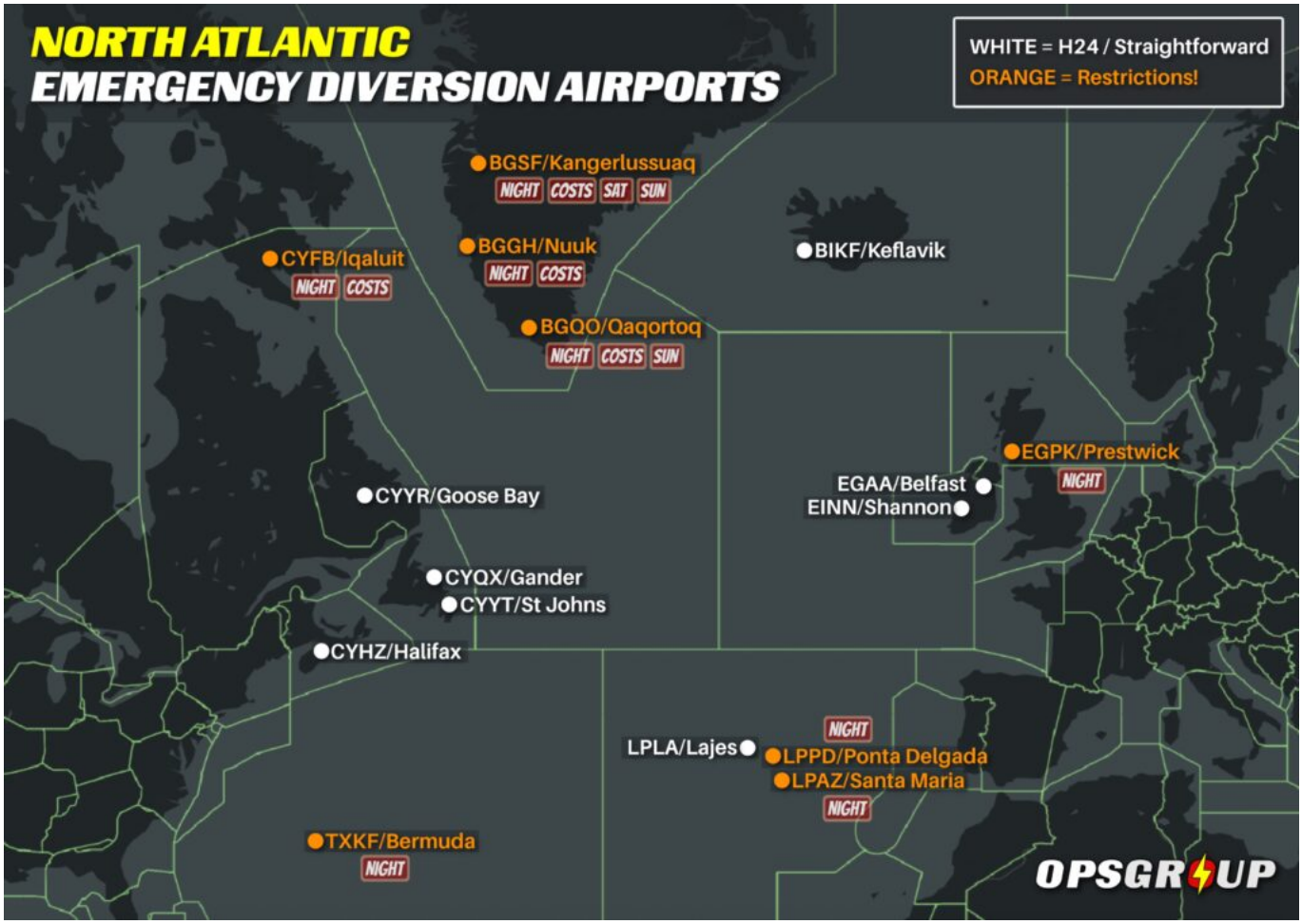
In OPSGROUP, we talk a lot about the North Atlantic. Whether it's a Plotting Chart you need, or an explanation of the Datalink Mandate, or a summary of big changes stretching back to the dawn of time – we've got you covered. We love the NAT so much we even enjoy asking ourselves annoying questions about it over and over again to see if we can answer them (we can).

But here's something we haven't fully looked into before – **if you're in big trouble on the NAT (like an engine on fire, for example), where can you go?**

Turns out there's quite a bit of complexity to this. Some airports don't have amazing levels of fire cover, some are closed at night, and some have weird setups where you have to pay them in advance to make sure they stay open in case you need them.

On fire right now?

You don't have time to read this article. Check this map quickly ⬇



Not on fire right now?

Great! Let's run through it all nice and slow.

We'll start with these **odd ones** below. And we're going to do everything in **local time** to keep things easy.

Also, for the uninitiated, **RFFS** means Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (ie. what level of fire cover an airport has), and if you're confused about what number means what, you can read all about it here.

Odd Ones

CYFB/Iqaluit

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-17, other times 12hrs notice required
- **RFFS:** 5 (up to RFFS 7 available on request)
- **Why odd?** So it's basically closed at night unless you make a special request for them to stay open in case you need them. If extended hours are needed, additional costs will apply to keep staff on standby. Requests to extend operating hours at the airport must be submitted using a specific doc for either RFF5 or RFF7. CYFB provides extra RFF coverage at night fairly often, typically several dozen times a month. Charges apply for the extended standby period depending on the level of fire cover required.

BGGH/Nuuk

- **Airport open:** 06-21 every day
- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Technically it's open at night, but in practice this is still difficult, especially in winter. In the summer months, when there's no snow and it's daylight almost all day every day, there won't be the same need for runway sweeping and using the airport as a diversion alternate might be more possible because they will only require standby personnel on short notice.

BGQO/Qaqortoq

- **Airport open:** Mon-Sat 08-17 (yep, closed on Sundays!)
- **RFFS:** 7 (3 hours notice for non-scheduled traffic)
- **Why odd?** Can be requested to stay open at night most of the time. But watch out! As we reported before, Greenland airports will charge you the better part of $3k if you list either of them on your flight plan as diversion alternates when they're closed.
- *You might be thinking "what about trusty old BGBW/Narsarsuaq?" in this neck of the woods. That was closed in May 2026, when the new airport at BGQO/Qaqortoq opened.*

BGSF/Sondrestrom

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-16 (summer May-Sep: Mon-Sat 07-15)
- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Same as BGQO, can be requested to stay open at nights or on weekends, but same costs will apply.

EGPK/Prestwick

- **Airport open:** H24
- **RFFS:** 7 (up to RFFS 9 available on request)
- **Why odd?** Often at night they close the terminals building (they always Notam it) so there are no facilities for diversions at these times.

LPPD/Ponta Delgada

- **Airport open:** 0615-0000
- **RFFS:** 7 (can be increased to RFFS 9 with 24hrs notice at a cost of 70 Euros per hour, although they say this can usually be increased for emergencies too).
- **Why odd?** At night (0000-0615) the airport is closed, although they have someone in the tower in case of emergency diverts. LPLA/Lajes is the only airport in the Azores that is fully open all night for diverts.

LPAZ/Santa Maria

- **Airport open:** It's complicated.
- **RFFS:** It's complicated.
- **Why odd?** Ok, here we go. So from **0645-2130** they are fully open with RFFS 6 (RFFS 8 available for a surcharge if you arrange in advance). Then from **2130-0000** the airport is closed but you can request they stay open for around 900 Euros (plus a fee to the handling agent). Then from **0000-0645** the airport is completely closed and cannot accept emergency diverts at all. Bottom line, just go to LPLA/Lajes instead.

TXKF/Bermuda

- **Airport open:** 06-23 every day
- **RFFS:** 9 daytime 07-23
- **Why odd?** To get them to open at night (ATC and RFFS) for emergencies, you need to give them 30 mins notice – so not ideal if your needs are super urgent. Also, they do sometimes publish Notams saying that ATC will not be available for certain periods at night, even for emergencies.

Not Odd Ones

Ok great, normal airports now! Here are all the straightforward ones that are open H24 with decent fire cover:

CYYR/Goose Bay
Open H24
RFF 8

CYQX/Gander
Open H24
RFF 5 (RFF 6/7 with 30 mins notice, RFF 8 with 1hr notice)

CYDF/Deer Lake
Open H24
RFF 6 (RFF 7 with 30 mins notice)

CYYT/St Johns
Open H24
RFF 7

CYHZ/Halifax
Open H24
RFF 8

BIKF/Keflavik
Open H24
RFF 8 daytime 05-19 (RFF 7 overnight 19-05)

EGAA/Belfast
Open H24

RFF 7 (RFF 8/9 with 24hrs notice)

EINN/Shannon
Open H24
RFF 9 (RFF 7 overnight 23-07)

LPLA/Lajes
Airport open 07-21 (but H24 for emergencies)
RFF 8 at all times

So there you have it, friends! While we're on the subject of **Emergency Diverts**, you might also be interested to read about NAT Contingency Procedures (what to do when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance due to an emergency). For more info about recent changes to **Greenland Airports**, click here. And to download the latest **OPSGROUP North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart 2025**, head over here.

As usual, any questions, let us know at team@ops.group.