

Do I need a TSA Waiver for a flight to the US?

David Mumford
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If you're heading to the US and are trying to work out whether you need a TSA Waiver for your flight, we have an Opsicle to help with that.

The TSA Waiver Opsicle

It's not that complicated (but they try hard)



This is the original source of the TSA Waiver rules which for some reason is issued in the form of a NOTAM and with the clear aim of being an incomprehensible as possible. **Let's fix that!**

FDC 64255 ZZZ SPECIAL SECURITY INSTRUCTIONS FOR CIVIL 1) FILE AND ARE ON AN ACTIVE FLIGHT PLAN (IFR OR VFR); 2) ARE EQUIPPED WITH AN OPERATIONAL MODE C OR S TRANSPONDER AND CONTINUOUSLY SQUAWK AN ATC ASSIGNED TRANSPONDER CODE; 3) MAINTAIN TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS WITH ATC; 4) AIRCRAFT NOT REGISTERED IN THE U.S. MUST OPERATE UNDER AN APPROVED TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (TSA) AVIATION SECURITY PROGRAM OR IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA/FAA AIRSPACE WAIVER; 5) ARE IN RECEIPT OF AND ARE OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION AND AN FAA/FAA AIRSPACE WAIVER IF THE AIRCRAFT IS REGISTERED IN A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY OR IS OPERATING WITH THE ICAO THREE LETTER DESIGNATOR OF A COMPANY IN A COUNTRY LISTED AS A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY, UNLESS THE OPERATOR HOLDS VALID FAA PART 129 OPERATIONS SPECIFICATIONS, FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION FOR OPERATIONS WITHIN U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE BY AIRCRAFT DESCRIBED IN THIS SUBPARAGRAPH C5 WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR IFR OPERATIONS. VFR FLIGHT OPERATIONS ARE PROHIBITED WITHIN U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE FOR ANY AIRCRAFT REQUIRING AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION; AND 6) AIRCRAFT NOT REGISTERED IN THE U.S. WHEN CONDUCTING POST-MAINTENANCE, MANUFACTURER, PRODUCTION, OR ACCEPTANCE FLIGHT TEST OPERATIONS, MUST MEET ALL OF THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS: A) A U.S. COMPANY MUST HAVE OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT; B) AN FAA-CERTIFICATED PILOT MUST SERVE AS PILOT IN COMMAND; C) ONLY CREWMEMBERS ARE PERMITTED ONBOARD THE AIRCRAFT; AND D) MAINTENANCE FLIGHT IS INCLUDED IN THE REMARKS SECTION OF THE FLIGHT PLAN. PART II CIVIL AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS THAT TRANSIT U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE. A. CIVIL AIRCRAFT, EXCEPT THOSE OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 5B, C, D, OR E OF THIS PART II, ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRANSIT THE TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE OF THE U.S. IF IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS: 1) FILE AND ARE ON AN ACTIVE FLIGHT PLAN (IFR OR DVFR); 2) ARE EQUIPPED WITH AN OPERATIONAL MODE C OR S TRANSPONDER AND CONTINUOUSLY SQUAWK AN ATC ASSIGNED TRANSPONDER CODE; 3) MAINTAIN TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS WITH ATC; 4) ARE OPERATING UNDER AN APPROVED TSA AVIATION SECURITY PROGRAM OR ARE OPERATING WITH AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA/FAA AIRSPACE WAIVER; IF: (A) THE AIRCRAFT IS NOT REGISTERED IN THE U.S.; OR (B) THE AIRCRAFT IS REGISTERED IN THE U.S. AND ITS MAXIMUM TAKEOFF GROSS WEIGHT IS GREATER THAN 100,309 POUNDS (45,500 KGS); 5) ARE IN RECEIPT OF AND ARE OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION IF THE AIRCRAFT IS REGISTERED IN A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY OR IS OPERATING WITH THE ICAO THREE LETTER DESIGNATOR OF A COMPANY IN A COUNTRY LISTED AS A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY, UNLESS THE OPERATOR HOLDS VALID FAA PART 129 OPERATIONS SPECIFICATIONS, FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION FOR TRANSIT OF U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE BY AIRCRAFT SUBJECT TO THIS PART II, SUBPARAGRAPH A5 WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR IFR OPERATIONS. DVFR AND VFR FLIGHT OPERATIONS ARE PROHIBITED FOR ANY AIRCRAFT TRANSITING U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE REQUIRING AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION. B. CIVIL AIRCRAFT REGISTERED IN CANADA OR MEXICO, AND ENGAGED IN OPERATIONS FOR THE PURPOSES OF AIR AMBULANCE, FIRE FIGHTING, LAW ENFORCEMENT, SEARCH AND RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY EVACUATION ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRANSIT U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE WITHIN 50 NM OF THEIR RESPECTIVE BORDERS WITH THE U.S. WITH OR WITHOUT AN ACTIVE FLIGHT PLAN, PROVIDED THEY

Break it down for me

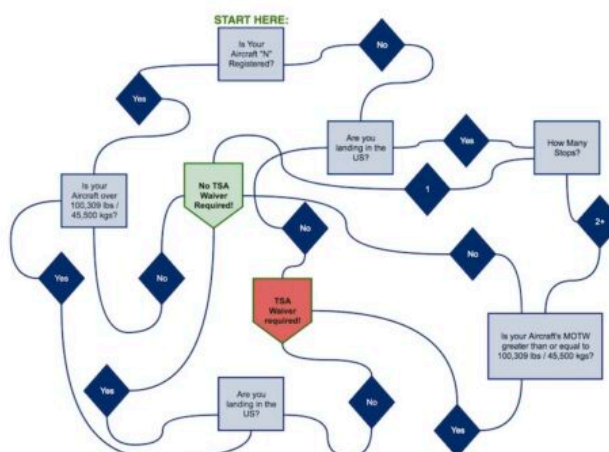
The TSA want to know **who is coming to, or overflying the US**, for security reasons. If they are comfortable with your flight, you get a **TSA Waiver**. It takes 7 days to get one – on occasion, less.

Who needs one?

Foreign registered aircraft over 100K lbs making **2 or more stops** in the US need a TSA Waiver.

All **overflights** over 100K lbs need one - and that includes N-reg. If you are foreign registered and overflying, you need one regardless of size. One single exception: If overflying with an aircraft under 100K lbs registered in a **Portal Country***, and the flight is from one of those countries, then you're good.

* Canada, Mexico, Bahamas, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, and Cayman Islands.



A few extra things...

You need to carry the **hard copy** onboard. It is only valid for **90 days**. Don't forget to include anyone **who may be onboard** when you file your initial request. You can file your request **here**, and get more info **here**.

Click to download PDF.

OPSGROUP members can download a copy for free here.

If you're not an OPSGROUP member, but you'd like to be, you can join here.

Let's start with the basics

Here is the TSA Waiver site. This is where you **submit your requests**.

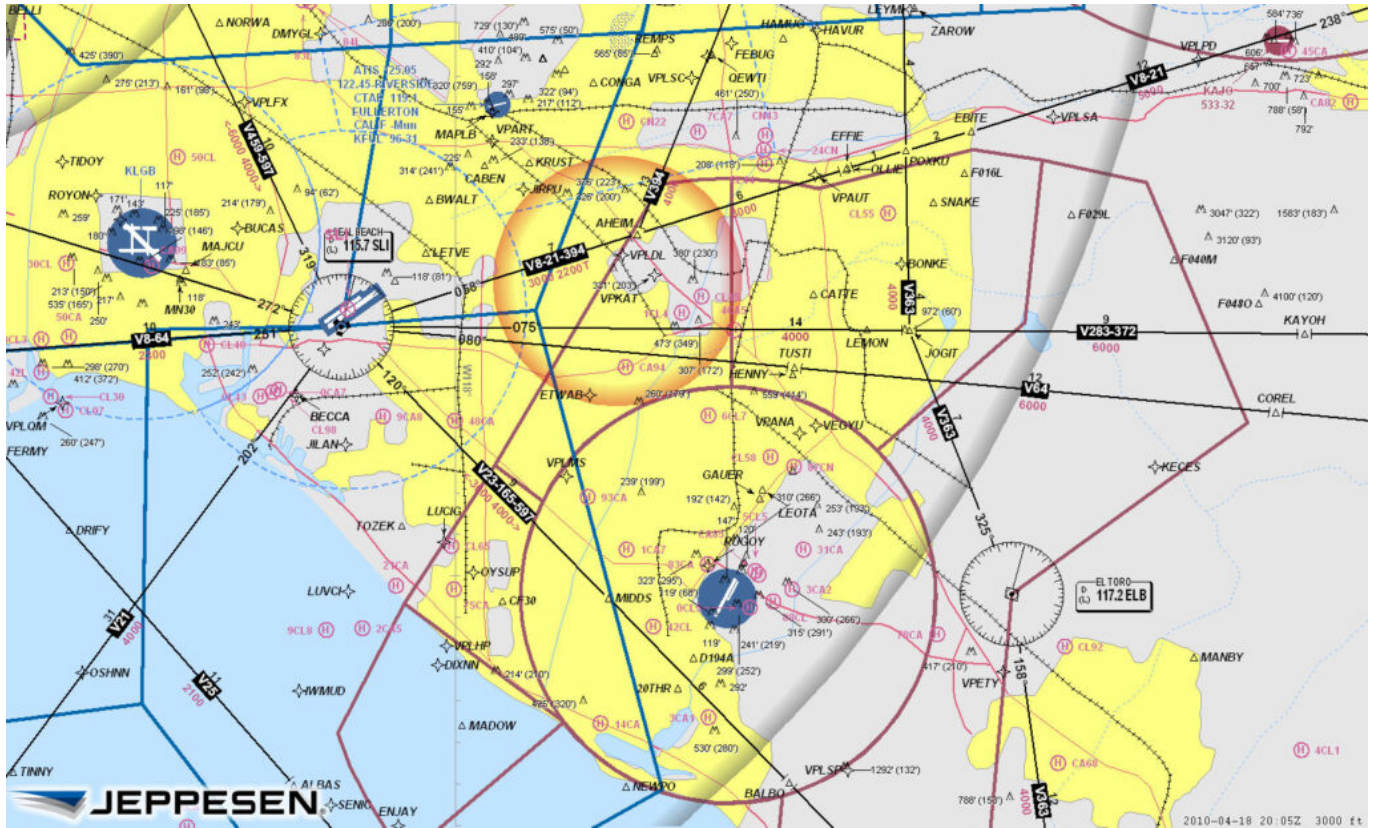
And here is the TSA site on waivers. This is where you can **find info on Waivers**.

Which Waiver is Right for You?

There are a few types. You have your Disney Theme Park, Washington DC Special Flight Rules Area/Flight

Restricted Zone, Major Sporting Events and Special Events Waivers.

And then you have your International Waivers which include International Air Ambulance, No Transponder and **International Single Trip Waivers** – this last one is what we're interested in.



The Disney Zone

The Guidance

International Waivers are required for 'various aircraft to fly within US airspace, which includes the airspace above the United States and its territories'.

Whether you need one depends on your **aircraft size, where it is registered and where you're coming from.**

Flying to and from the US

International TSA Waivers are not required for any aircraft arriving to or departing from the US or its territories. So this applies if you only make one stop in the US (i.e. you fly in and straight back out again).

Flying within US airspace

Planning to make more than one stop in the US? You'll need an International Waiver if you do this in a foreign registered aircraft which is heavier than 100,309 pounds MTOW (45,500 kg).

But, since most private aircraft generally fit under this weight limit, **you probably don't need one.**



Most Bizjets are under the weight restriction.

Overflying the US

OK, here we go, the bit to know – this is for when you take off and land somewhere not in the US or its territories, and overfly the US in between.

If your aircraft weighs 100,309 lbs MTOW or more: you need a Waiver, even if your aircraft is US registered.

If your aircraft weighs less than 100,309 lbs MTOW: US registered aircraft do not need one. If you are foreign registered and overflying, you do need one – unless your aircraft is registered in a “Portal Country”, and is flying directly from any one of these (prior to entering US airspace).

The Portal Countries:

- Canada
- Mexico
- Bahamas
- Bermuda
- Cayman Islands
- British Virgin Islands

Special Interest Countries

The black sheep of the World of Waivers. Probably the easiest category to work out the rules for. **You’ll need an International Waiver for everything** – ops to, from, within and over the US, if your aircraft is registered in one of these countries. The list currently includes: **Cuba, Iran, North Korea, China, Russia, Sudan, and Syria.**

To recap...

Landings: Foreign registered aircraft over 100K lbs making 2 or more stops in the US need a Waiver.

Overflights: All overflights over 100K lbs need one – and that includes N-reg. If you are foreign registered and overflying, you need one regardless of size. There’s one single exception: If overflying with an aircraft under 100K lbs registered in a Portal Country, and the flight is from any of those countries, then you’re good.

Special Interest Countries: Aircraft registered in these need a Waiver for everything – ops to, from,

within and over the US.

Where is this officially written?

There were some official, permanent Notams published back in 2016. **FDC 6/4255 and FDC 6/4256 (KFDC A0006/15 and A0006/16)**. These have vanished though and we can't find any replacements.

The best spot to read it (officially) seems to be in the AIM Chapter 5 (*Air Traffic Procedures*), Section 6 (*National Security and Interception Procedures*), and take a look at 5-6-7 for the stuff on transiting US airspace.

How to get it and what to do with it.

You need to submit your request to the Authorization Office here. It is recommended that you submit your request **at least 7 days before** your planned flight to the US.

When you apply, don't forget to include all those who may be onboard in your request.

Once you have it, it is only **valid for 90 days**. You need to **carry the hard copy** onboard with you.

Any other things to know?

If you do operate over US airspace then you need to stick to their rules which also require that you:

- Use an active VFR or IFR flight plan
- Be equipped with a Mode C or S transponder and use an ATC-assigned transponder code
- Communicate clearly with ATC

Any other gotchas?

A couple, as reported by an OPSGROUP member:

Watch your weight: *One in particular issue I have seen a few times is that of Private Global 7500s. Most owners of this aircraft are usually stepping up from a previous version like the Global 6000 series. Many fail to recognize that this step up has a significant impact on their US TSA requirements. I think most miss the weight class change and simply think of the aircraft as a Global XRS with better range. The implications of not having a valid waiver can be significant.*

Validity period: *A waiver can be valid for "up to 90 days" with the required dates being set during the initial application. A waiver may be modified up to three times with the end date being fixed (i.e. the end date on the original application must remain the same for each subsequent modification). There is a caveat I should mention regarding the number of allowed modifications, being that this is only valid within a calendar year.*

Anything we missed?

Let us know, at team@ops.group

De-Ice De-Ice Baby: Cold Weather Opsicles

OPSGROUP Team
25 September, 2024



In the Northern Hemisphere the winter season is well and truly upon us, which means various extra things to think about – like different procedures, low visibility challenges, cold temperature corrections, where you left the other glove, and of course de-icing!

So, to help you out if you aren't so familiar with all things Winter Ops we have put together a little series of **Opsicles** – *Refreshing bits of ops info, just for members.*

Winter Opsicle #1: De-Ice De-Ice Baby

Most operators we've met apply a **"Keep it clean, keep it safe!"** policy meaning *don't risk it; if there is anything on the airplane get it off before you take-off.*

There are some caveats to this – less than **3mm of frost on the underside of the wing** around the fuel tanks is generally acceptable. If you don't have a tiny frost ruler to hand then a general rule of thumb is clear paint markings showing through means it's ok. A light dusting of hoarfrost on the fuselage is also fine (if your manual says so).

The areas where **anything is unacceptable** are your **critical surfaces** – the upper surface of the wings, horizontal stabilisers, leading edge devices... Basically any lift and/or control surface on the aircraft. If you've ever done a Winter Ops Refresher you probably know this statistic off-by-heart but *"a very small amount of roughness, in thickness as low as 0.40mm (1/64in) can disrupt the airflow and lead to severe lift loss..."*

So keeping it clean seems like a good rule. Alas, a rule not all follow...

The trouble is, it can get confusing (no, that crew in the video weren't confused, just negligent). But when you are out there, under pressure, managing a bigger and more complex workload, it can quickly get complicated especially when you throw in some **variable weather conditions** to the mix, and some **different mixtures into your HOT calculations.**

So our **Winter Opsicle #1** is a handy guide to help with just that.

What's in them?

De-Ice De-Ice Baby is looking at de-icing/anti-icing. It comes in three parts, and you can download all, none, just one depending on what you find helpful.

- **A De-Icing Decision Process** checklist – to help you determine whether or not to consider de-icing/anti-icing.
- **Caution: Hot Stuff** – a sort of FAQ on Holdover Times.
- **Too HOT to Handle** – a generic guide on what HOT to expect.

None of these are designed to be used in place of official (and possibly much more accurate) documents and manuals, but we do hope they will provide some refresher info on things to think about during the winter season.

Over the winter season, we'll try and post more so you can **build up your own Winter and Cold Weather Ops Pack**.

DE-ICE DE-ICE BABY

Too HOT to Handle

We said it once, we'll say it again - these are just to give an idea of **What's HOT and what's not**. Always use official tables, and preferably ones specific to the fluid type.

Here is a space to write where your proper, official manuals can be found so you know where to look on the day:

My official manuals that I will use during operations are:

SNOWFALL INTENSITY vs VISIBILITY

	TEMP (C)	VISIBILITY (MILES/ METERS)			
		HEAVY	MODERATE	LIGHT	VERY LIGHT
NIGHT TIME	<+08 ABOVE	<1.0 0.00	<1.0-2.5 0.00-0.000	<2.5-5 0.000-0.000	<5 0.000
	BELOW +8	<0.0 0.00	<0.0-1.0 0.00-0.000	<1.0-5 0.000-0.000	<5 0.000
LIGHT TIME	<+08 ABOVE	<1.0 0.00	<1.0-2.5 0.00-0.000	<2.5-5 0.000-0.000	<5 0.000
	BELOW +8	<0.0 0.00	<0.0-1.0 0.00-0.000	<1.0-5 0.000-0.000	<5 0.000

HOT TABLES

TYPE I GENERIC

OMT (C)	FLYING ICE	SNOW GROUND ON PELLET	SNOW GROUND ON PELLET	SNOW GROUND ON PELLET	SNOW GROUND ON PELLET	SNOW GROUND ON PELLET	SNOW GROUND ON PELLET
<0 and above	15-12	10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10
<0 to <0	10-10	10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10
<0 to <0	10-10	10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10
below <0	10-10	10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10	10-10

DE-ICE DE-ICE BABY

CAUTION: HOT STUFF

Working out your Holdover Time is enough to freeze anyone's brain. So we have made you an easy "What do I need to do?" De-icing/Anti-icing guide.

First up, answer the questions below, then take a look at our handy HOTs to be expected table. Word of caution though - these are generic guidelines and not official docs so always use those!

DO I NEED TO DE-ICE OR ANTI-ICE?

De-icing is all about clearing off anything cold currently stuck to your aircraft. Check the critical surfaces of your aircraft. Most types allow for less than 3mm of frost on the underside of the wing, around the fuselage. Anything else - you need to De-ice.

Anti-ice is about stopping stuff from sticking to it before take-off so in this case, check the weather and then move onto the next question.

IS THERE PRECIPITATION?

Precipitation means anything outside that could turn into ice and stick to your wing.

To work out if it will stick, you'll want to check the outside temperature too - that means the temperature of the air, but also whether you might have cold soaked wings.

WILL IT STICK?

The sort of precipitation is important. You are going to need to know the type of cold stuff, and cold it is, to determine your HOT. Sometimes there are different types - use the worst one (FZDZ or FZDZ) if they are present. Remember: There might be some precipitation which your aircraft is not approved to operate in.

WHAT SORT OF PRECIPITATION?

Use a Visibility to Snowfall intensity table to work out whether snow is heavy, moderate, light or very light. Or make your FO stand outside and time how long it takes for them to turn into a snowman.

SNOW CLUE?

Don't forget the forecast. Use the ATIS, use your eyeballs, and make sure you consider what might start falling to the show before your take-off time. If in doubt, always use the worst case weather HOT.

WHAT WEATHER?

You're going to see a minimum and a maximum. Always use the minimum and if you exceed that, then do an inspection. The tables are just to give an idea - use official ones for your fluid type.

WHAT HOT?



If you're an OPSGROUP member you can click on each thumbnail to head to the Opsicle PDF download page.

Further reading

There is a huge amount of info out there (from more official sources) including:

- This very informative AOPA article on all things ice.
- This FAA Guide for Pilots on de-icing big aircraft.
- This EASA Safety Bulletin on proper de-icing procedures.
- This Airbus Manual on Getting to Grips with Cold Weather Ops.

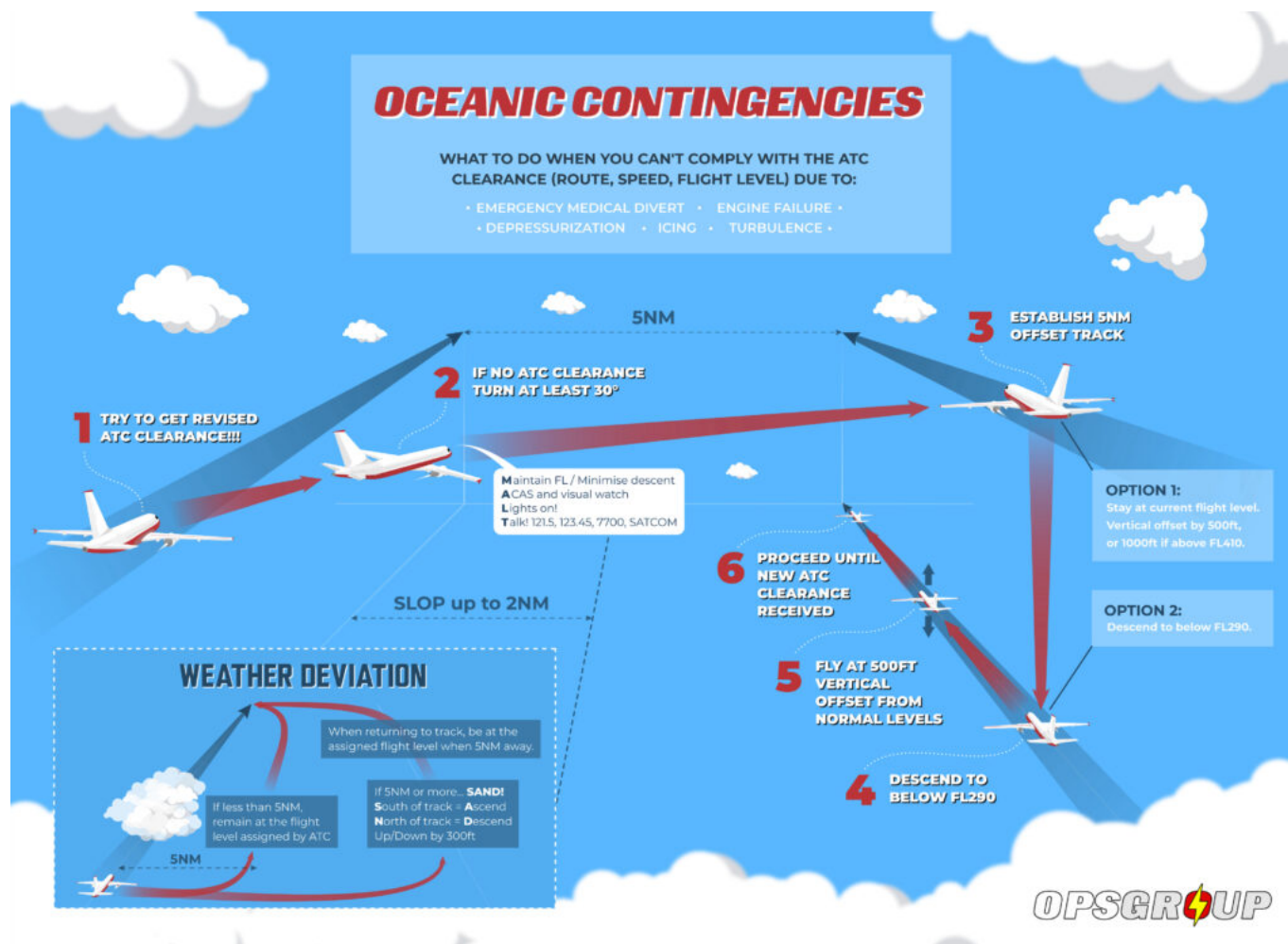
Something to help with NAT Contingencies

OPSGROUP Team
25 September, 2024



There are **standard contingency procedures** to follow if you are in the **NAT HLA**, they have been around for a while. But folk still struggle with them from time to time (so would we at 3am over the North Atlantic if we had to suddenly try to remember what they were while things were breaking or storms were flashing).

We have written about this before. Here's how it works:



Unfortunately, sometimes folk still do get it wrong.

The most common mistakes seem to be people **applying a contingency procedure when they are in contact with ATC** (ATC will give you a revised clearance if you need it so check first before diving into a contingency manoeuvre).

Sometimes though, we just don't quite do it right because **there are a few little steps to follow** depending on what is going on. For example, if you are deviating around weather, then the first step is to try and get a re-clearance from ATC. **If you can't get one, that's when you follow the contingency procedure**, and then what you do depends on whether your detour is less than or more than 5nm...

So we decided to make something else to help...

Introducing the Opsigami Opsicle

The NAT Contingency Opsigami Opsicle is less exciting than it sounds. **It is the two contingencies - for emergencies and for weather** - laid out step by step. That's the **Opsicle** part.

The **Opsigami** bit(Origami with an Ops twist) is because if you print it out (and fold it correctly) then it will give you each step in order to help you follow it as you need to.

It looks like this:

And it works like this:

We made this for OPSGROUP members - we hope you find it useful!

Just in case you don't, here is a great Origami (ok, paper airline) design which you can fold it into instead ☐