

Checklist

Going Green

“Have you checked the A/FD?”

My primary flight instructor and I were preparing to launch for my very first trip to another airport, and part of my preparatory homework assignment was his instruction to check “all available information” as required by the regulations (14 CFR 91.103).

As I had learned in ground school, the FAA’s distinctive green-covered *Airport/Facility Directory* (A/FD) is the go-to source for some of the vital information I needed about my destination, Virginia’s Winchester Regional Airport (KOKV). Published every 56 days in a seven-volume set, the A/FD provides data on all airports, seaplane bases, and heliports that are open to the public. It also includes information on joint-use military facilities and, where specifically requested by the Department of Defense (DOD), data on selected private-use airports.

For the flight from my home airport, Leesburg Executive (KJYO) to KOKV, the A/FD helpfully informed me that I could expect to find the Winchester Airport 3 miles southeast of the city. Supported by a simple but information-rich airport sketch, the text reported that KOKV’s runway 14-32 is 5,498 feet long by 100 feet wide, and that the traffic pattern altitude is 1,706. I further found the frequencies I would need to get weather information and communicate my position on the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF). When I trained later for night and instrument flying, I went to the A/FD for information on how to activate runway lighting, get an IFR clearance, recognize the runway lighting array, and tune the appropriate navigational aids (NAVAIDs).

With respect to NAVAIDs, that’s the “facility” part of the publication’s title. If you need the frequency of a very-high-frequency omnidirectional range (VOR) facility, you will find it listed alphabetically as a separate entry. Though somewhat less critical in the age of moving map GPS navigators that use latitude/longitude coordinates and satellites to find VOR facilities, the NAVAID entry also includes a list of unusable and/or unreliable radials.

But Wait — There’s More!

Even if the A/FD contained just the above content, the FAA’s little green book would be a golden resource.

But there’s a lot more material packed in. For instance, the A/FD includes airport elevation, hours of operation, types of fuel, and level of maintenance / repair facilities on site. On a cross-country flight from Virginia to Arizona several years ago, my flying companions and I consulted the A/FD to find an airport that could replenish our oxygen supply.

Other useful items include telephone numbers for the FAA, Flight Standards District Offices (FSDO), and air traffic control facilities in the region covered by each volume. Again on the trip to Arizona, my flying friends and I used this information to contact ATC about recommended or preferred routing for a trip that would take us through busy Class B airspace. And, speaking of preferred routes, one of the A/FD appendices offers a list of ATC-preferred routes and, where applicable, routing for tower en route control routes (TEC). Still more chart-related information is the A/FD’s Aeronautical Chart Bulletin on mid-cycle changes to aeronautical sectional, terminal area, and helicopter route charts.

Go Green — Go Digital

Recognizing that many pilots increasingly prefer electronic data, the FAA has also made the A/FD available as a digital download in PDF format. The digital A/FD includes everything you find in the paper version, with the general information, directory legend, and supplemental information pages printed as multi-page PDF files. As the FAA website notes, there will be a time near the end of each 56-day airspace cycle in which both current and future editions of the digital A/FD are available. To facilitate finding the correct file, the hyperlinks include effective dates for each cycle.

Regardless of the format you choose, the A/FD is an invaluable resource for aviators. Don’t leave the pattern without it!

Learn More

To report A/FD errors or changes, go to:
9-ATOR-HQ-AIS-AIRPORTCHANGES@faa.gov

Digital Airport/Facility Directory website:
http://avn.faa.gov/index.asp?xml=aeronav/applications/d_afd

Susan Parson is a Special Assistant in the FAA’s Flight Standards Service and editor of FAA Safety Briefing. She is an active general aviation pilot and flight instructor.