



Welcome to Training at VATSIM Seattle ARTCC

We are delighted you have chosen to join our team and wanted to set out a few key points as you begin your training with us. Everything in this *Welcome to Training Memo* is intended to make your training more efficient and effective, ultimately getting you on the scopes, controlling aircraft live on the VATSIM network, as soon as possible.

A Challenge Awaits....and so do rewards!

We know that starting out in VATSIM can be a steep learning curve, and it may often feel like there are far too many things to learn before you key the mic and issue instructions to your first live pilot. From experience, we can tell you that many new controllers learn after their first few lessons that controlling on VATSIM is not what they hoped or expected, and a reasonable number of people leave the hobby as a result. Our objective is to ensure you have every opportunity to stick with it and come to know what we know as experienced controllers—that once some fundamentals are mastered, controlling is a rewarding and thrilling hobby that offers increasing challenges, a tremendous depth of knowledge, the unique satisfaction of mastering a difficult skill, and lasting friendships and a sense of community that are more typically found in team sports. In some ways, we envy each of you because we know the joys that await each of you if you dedicate enough of your time and energy.

So let's begin!

What you should have done already

We know you will have received a pair of “Welcome to the Seattle ARTCC!” e-mails from our ATM and DATM with information about installing the key VATSIM software (VRC and Teamspeak) as well as the initial steps you should take to being training (including links to the *Basic ATC Reference Material* and the *Basics of Clearance Delivery and Ground Control*

on the VATUSA website). You'll have been directed to our *New Controllers Guide*. You'll also have an explanation about how to request training by using the Scheduler on the ZSE Website (<http://www.zseartcc.org/schedule>).

You will have also completed the VATUSA Computer Based Training (CBT) for S1.

What should you do next?

You should prepare for your first training session by first completing three important steps:

- **Read** the Training Documents on the ZSE Website (under the Controller/Documents tab) for *Observer* and *Minor Clearance Delivery/Ground*, as well as the *S1 Syllabus*. Some of this may overlap what you have learned from the VATUSA CBT, but it is tailored to our local procedures and it will help enormously for you to have studied this material before your first training session with an Instructor or Mentor. You will also return to these documents again after your training, and find re-reading them brings greater comprehension and retention.
- **Set up VRC** so you are ready for your first training session. There is a 46-minute YouTube video available (https://youtu.be/_T8cApNmHhc) that walks you through the set-up step-by-step. Ensuring you are comfortable with your VRC setup is crucial as this is a critical tool for controlling during training and live on the VATSIM network.
- **Observe** a ZSE controller handling traffic on the network, ideally at Portland International Airport (KPDX) with a reasonable number of aircraft requesting and receiving IFR and VFR clearances as well as being given taxi and other ground instructions. If you are lucky enough to do observe an Instructor or Mentor, you should feel free to ask questions if the controller has time. Evenings, Pacific time, are the best times.

What additional preparation might be worthwhile?

Your training will go *much faster* if you have invested a little extra effort before your first training session. Here are some things to consider trying:

- **Listen to LIVEATC.NET** and get an idea for how controllers and pilots interact, how to use the phonetic alphabet (“alpha, bravo, charlie.....”), and especially how IFR clearances are given using the C.R.A.F.T. technique. In fact, practice reading IFR clearances aloud yourself—find your “controller’s voice”! For practice, you can use the preferred routes on the website to places like KSFO, KLAX, KDEN, KSLC and KOAK.

- **Explore Skyvector.com, Airnav.com, and Flightaware.com.** These web-based resources are invaluable for locating aeronautical charts, identifying airports and valid routes, sourcing real-world flight plans (which are often used by VATSIM pilots) and having ready-to-hand weather and other crucial information. Be familiar with them before you begin training and you will progress more rapidly.
- **Read FAA Order 7110.65** especially sections 3-7-1, 3-7-2, 3-7-3, and 3-7-4 for ground operations, 3-11-1 for helicopter taxi and ground movements, 4-2-1 and 4-2-5 for clearance delivery, 4-5-2 for flight directions, and 4-5-4 for lowest usable flight level. The website <https://pointsixtyfive.com> is an excellent on-line, searchable, annotated version of the FAA's "bible" for all things ATC. Knowing your way around this document will become more and more valuable as you progress as a controller.
- **Assemble your own Ready-Reference.** Over time and as you build experience, you will collect and assemble your own materials for making controlling easier. You may even borrow "cheat sheets" from other controllers or from the Helpful Documents in the Controller Documents section of the ZSE website. When you start out, a simple set of materials printed out in hardcopy and ready-to-hand for your training will put you a few steps ahead. The internet is filled with these resources. Here is a basic set you might consider: *KPDX airport diagram, list of airline call signs & short codes (e.g. QXE = "Horizon Air", MTN = "Mountain Air"), list of navigation equipment suffixes, list of Standard Instrument Departures at KPDX with available transition names, list of popular destination airport abbreviations.* Refer to the ZSE Website for preferred routing for the most popular destination airports. There are various flash cards that do a good job describing airspace as well.
- **Schedule training.** Please schedule training regularly---ideally three times a week. If we can get to you all those times a week great, if not we will do our best. Although you don't use muscles to be a controller, think of muscle memory and using it often when doing any work out and seeking improvement. If you jog once a month think how long it might take to improve. Practice doesn't make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect. That's what the training staff is working towards with you. How long does it take? Much of that depends on your commitment. We know what works and we won't lower our standards. Help us help you!

Who are we, anyway?

Your Training Department is staffed and led by experienced Instructors and Mentors. **Frank Miller**, your Training Administrator, began as a VATSIM pilot, then started controlling, completed his real-world private pilot training, and advanced to become an Instructor here. The training staff includes real-world FAA controllers, real-world flight instructors and pilots,

and long-standing VATSIM contributors. We each have our own stories here at the VATSIM Seattle ARTCC and we share an eagerness to help you begin yours.

If you're ready, let's roll!

By all means put in for training sessions right away using the scheduler on the ZSE website, but don't wait for that first session to start learning. You'll be asked soon enough to confirm that you've completed at least the steps we've outlined in this memo, so get to it!

We will be in touch personally to get to know you and what your interests are, where you want to go, how you learn best and any real world or simulated aviation experience you might have. We want to tailor your training as much as possible to your needs, your availability, and your willingness to invest that little bit extra. If you have significant aviation experience and are highly motivated, you might be eligible for an accelerated training program.

Our "contract" with you

Your training at ZSE is based on a "contract" between you and us---we each have to do our part. That's why we are sending you this memo and setting out what we recommend and expect of you. We want the expectations to be clear on both ends. Controllers on VATSIM are highly trained compared to many who fly on the network and dedicate time to training to pass along what we know and cultivate new controllers. We are giving up our time for you---and we expect you to keep your end of the bargain by investing at least as much your time in your own training as we invest with you.

We're glad you're here and wish you well in your journey to becoming a VATSIM controller here at the Seattle ARTCC. We pride ourselves on setting high standards and maintaining a high performance culture. That said, we also want you to enjoy controlling as much as we do.

Any questions please contact the training department training@zseartcc.org or feel free to write directly to me or ask to meet up on TeamSpeak for a chat.

Blue skies!

Frank Miller

ZSE Training Administrator