

Reducing the Risk of Midair Collisions in VFR Practice Areas

Purpose: This document lists recommended practices for depicting and coordinating procedures to be used in VFR practice areas to reduce the risk of midair collisions.

Background: An analysis of the data involving midair collisions between 2001 and 2005 showed that 11 midair collisions occurred, involving aircraft operating to, from, or in practice areas. These recommendations are intended for flight schools and others involved in flight training.

Recommendations: It is recommended that:

1. Pilots of all participating aircraft announce their entry and exit and their location while in the practice area. While inside the practice area, pilots should communicate position relative to a known landmark, altitude or block attitude of use, and intentions. This information should be communicated on the air-to-air frequency, 122.75 MHz, or other designated frequency, as available and authorized.
2. Certificated and non-certificated flight schools in the area develop a local practice area map to facilitate coordination among schools regarding practice areas in use and recommended entry and exit procedures. The practice area map will also serve as a means to teach and promote practice area procedures and routes. This information should be widely distributed to all area flight instructors and students, including independent operators.
3. Maneuvers be flown at an odd altitude, such as 1,150 feet, rather than 1,200 feet. This practice will tend to randomly disperse the traffic vertically.
4. When possible, an observer be taken on flights where additional seats are available. The observer can enhance the traffic scan of a single pilot.
5. Entry and exit route procedures, including recommended flight paths and altitudes, be established. Entry and exit points, as well as corridors to and from practice areas, should be depicted as high density traffic areas and extra vigilance should be exercised. Consideration should be given to an increased risk of collision when aircraft converge on a common landmark from different directions.
6. Periodic analysis of events and operations related to these procedures be accomplished among the participating organizations. Identified improvements should be made and monitored to continually assure safe operations.