

ATIS and AWIS

When Dave Mac fills in for his mate Geoff and heads off to Pia Wadjarri, or Damo tootles off to Dongara in the 182 to check on the farm, or Ray heads off to Bremer in the RV-14, there are no aerodrome forecasts. So they're stuck with area forecasts, whatever other info they can get from BoM, and the locals on the ground telling them the weather is okay or not.

If you're off to somewhere bigger like Albany or Bunbury or Geraldton, of course you also have a TAF to help you. But that's still only a forecast, which means it's what BoM considers mostly likely to happen, not what will actually happen.

AWIS

But most of the aerodromes that have TAFs also have real-time information, in the form of an Aerodrome Weather Information Service, or AWIS. These are available by phone, and in many cases also on a VHF frequency, with the details in the ERSA entry for the aerodrome under the heading "Meteorological information provided", like this one for Busselton:

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION PROVIDED

1. TAF CAT A, METAR/SPECI.
2. AWIS Phone 08 6216 2604 - Report faults to BoM.
3. AWIS FREQ 128.05 - Report faults to AD OPR.

They're typically updated every minute, and they give you a nice computer-generated robot voice with the following information:

- Aerodrome name
- Time in UTC
- Wind in degrees magnetic and speed
 - Like all wind directions, if it's written as in a TAF or GPWT, it's true, and if it's spoken it's magnetic
- Visibility
- Weather
- Cloud below 10,000 ft (quite accurately eg. SCT 1800 ft, BKN 3400 ft)
- Temperature
- Dewpoint
- QNH
- Rainfall in the last 10 minutes

Note that it's all in the same order as a TAF or a METAR. Sure, a TAF doesn't have dewpoint and rainfall, but all the rest is the same, so whether you're writing it down or just listening, you kind of know what to expect.

ATIS

This is a bit more complex because it's not just weather information. Most of them are not hard to understand provided you know what to expect. Like an AWIS, the met information is all in the same order as a TAF, but before that you have the aerodrome information. For an aerodrome like Perth it's not very hard:

- Perth terminal information Alpha (so when you talk to them and advise receipt of Alpha, they know you've listened to the latest information);
- Runway in use;
- Any operational information about what to expect eg. Expect ILS approach;
- Met information;
- Time to the nearest half minute;
- "On first contact with Perth Ground or Approach, notify receipt of information Alpha";
 - If you're taxiing for takeoff, your first contact with the controllers will be Perth Ground, and if you're inbound, it will be with Approach.

They don't advise frequencies because that's information that doesn't change, and that you should have already looked up.

And when the Tower is closed, the ATIS generally becomes the AWIS.

Jandakot's ATIS has more information, and is therefore more overwhelming to a novice pilot. It's recorded by a controller, so it's a real human voice, and a typical example would be:

- Jandakot terminal information Delta;
- Runway 24;
- *Runway 24 Left for circuits and departures via Armadale Shops, frequency 119.4;*
- *Runway 24 Right for arrivals and all other departures, frequency 118.1;*
- Wind varying between 250° and 280°, 15 knots, maximum crosswind 10 knots;
- Visibility greater than 10 km;
- Cloud few 1000, scattered 2500;
- Due Perth duty runway 03, caution wake turbulence;
- On first contact with Jandakot Ground or Tower, notify receipt of Delta.

If you've done your homework, once you know the runway, the bit in italics becomes superfluous. For instance, if you're inbound from the south and you know Runway 24 is in use, you know you're going to arrive via Boatyard or Oakford (your choice), you know

you'll be landing on 24 Right, and you know you'll probably join downwind. You'll talk to the Tower at Oakford or Boatyard, and you'll stay on that frequency.

Or if you're on the ground and departing via Armadale for Northam, you'll be taking off on 24 Left, you'll get your taxi clearance on Ground, your clearance to cross 24 Right on Tower 118.1, and your takeoff clearance on Tower 119.4. And after that you'll get airborne, depart off the end of crosswind to Armadale, and stay at 1000 ft until you're clear of the inbound traffic at 1500 ft.

For the above example, you may just scribble down:

- *D*
- *24*
- *280/15 XW 10*
- *10+*
- *BKN 2500*
- *PH 03*

Item 1: a reminder to say "Received Delta" on first contact

Item 2: you have an idea what your taxi clearance, or your circuit joining clearance, is going to be

Item 3: 280/15 is the worst-case scenario for crosswind

Item 5: FEW plus SCT = BKN, and this means 2500 is a ceiling that you may be stuck below

So as with most of your flying, preparation is key.

Here are a few numbers if you want to have a listen and get familiar (or refamiliarize yourself) with the format:

- Perth ATIS – 9476 8800
- Perth AWIS – 6216 2633
- Jandakot ATIS – 9476 8755
- Jandakot AWIS 6216 2618
- Cunderdin AWIS – 6216 2608

Happy flying, and as always, especially with the wet winter we've had that doesn't look like it's finished yet, get every bit of weather information you can find before you go.

Kevin