

# Frequency Control Protocol

The way we keep from crashing each other's aircraft here at Apollo XI Field

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If someone is flying an aircraft on a particular channel and someone in the pits or parking lot turns on a transmitter with the same channel, an abrupt and certain out of control condition will result. It is usually only a matter of a few seconds until the flying aircraft crashes into the ground completely out of control. Two radios on the same channel create a condition where neither has control of the aircraft.



Obviously there is more at stake here than the price of an airplane. Time and effort are lost and the uncontrollable crash could result in doing even more damage to people or property on the ground.

The **Frequency Poles** are used to prevent such a tragedy. **Their proper use is paramount to safe and fun flying for all pilots sharing the public facility here at Apollo XI Field.** Proper protocols will not only prevent disasters, but allow more camaraderie among pilots and a more enjoyable flying experience. In other words, we can all get along!

This leaflet contains guidelines of protocol that are not steadfast rules that you should be proud to break in order to show how “cool” you are. No one is the police here, and if the police are called, they are unlikely to give tickets for “rudeness” or not conforming to a simple set of guidelines. However, being the mature, intelligent, and considerate human beings that we are, we can all do our best to follow some outlines of common sense and common courtesy.

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*Here are a few basic guidelines that have been traditionally followed that provide for more successful frequency sharing:*

**Know what channel your transmitter is on!** This may sound ridiculous but with many park flyers on the 27MHz “toy” frequency, many new pilots may get confused between 27 MHz and 72 MHz.

**The majority of the R/C pilots here fly on the “72 MHz (MegaHertz) band”** that is the model aircraft band as allocated by the FCC. It is subdivided into specific frequencies or “channels” between 72 and 73 MHz.

**You will find the poles on the Frequency stands labeled with channel numbers on each one ranging from channel 11 to 60.** You will also notice slots for the 6 meter band for those with FCC certification to operate a transmitter at those frequencies. Know your radio's channel number!

**Before turning on your transmitter, be sure that the pole marked with your channel number is empty.** If no one is using your channel (empty pole), place your Frequency Flag into the pole so that it is clearly visible that your channel is now in use. Then you may turn on your transmitter. With this system, there is no need to shout your channel number before turning on, but it doesn't hurt to do so.

You may now utilize the channel for your allocated slot of time. **A good guideline is 15 minutes.** During your “15 minutes” you may have your transmitter on anywhere on the field you like: Helicopter circle, park flyer area, main runway, pit area, or you may even take a walk with your transmitter to do a “range check” to be sure that you have full control with antenna collapsed from the pit areas to near the pilot stands in the infield.

After your flight or other usage of the channel, be sure the aircraft battery is turned off first, especially for electrics with Electronic Speed Controls that may be unpredictable in absence of a signal, then power OFF your transmitter, and finally collapse the antenna.

**Double check before pulling your flag that your transmitter is OFF.** Lights, a meter, or an LED panel should clearly indicate that it is powered off. Now it is safe to remove your flag from the frequency pole. If you plan to use the channel again, you may either take the flag with you or clip it or set it (on a non-windy day) horizontally near the pole. This indicates that you plan to use the channel again, as long as it is clearly *not* inside the channel flag holder.

**Once your flag is removed** (after your transmitter is verified OFF) you may announce “Channel X is OFF” if you know someone is waiting for the channel. This announcement is greatly appreciated by the “on-deck” pilot and will go a long way towards diplomacy at the field. If you know that no one is waiting for your channel, you may fuel up, and go it another 15 minutes.

**Don’t assume**, however, that since no one was on your channel when you arrived at the field, that you can simply take your field box out to the pilot stand and fly for hours, refueling in the grass. Most likely your channel buddy will have arrived and is getting impatient.

**Do not pull anyone else’s flag!** It is better to only put your hands on your own flag, that way there is no confusion, and only the Pilot in Command is responsible for telling the world that the channel is in-use or is available.



**Please be sure to always remember to pull your flag when done using it.** We usually remember to pull our flags after each flight but often at the end of the day, there are quite a few forgotten flags in the polls. After your last flight of the day, your mind tends to think about what you need to do to clean up your airplane to get it “car ready” and what your plans are for going home and what to do next.

**Most importantly, get to know the folks on your channel.** The word “**your**” here implies plural! Meaning all the folks that have transmitters on that channel need to share the frequency time. Make them your best buddies at the field; after all, you have one thing in common already! As one pilot offers, “I know by name, face, and aircraft, the six or seven regulars who share my most used channels. We watch out for each other, often spot for each other, and never do we want to shoot one another down.”

**Don’t skip out on this social step even if you have a synthesized transmitter capable of operating the entire band.** Often a friendly handshake is quicker and more enjoyable than changing a crystal in your receiver and the code on your transmitter.

Often this distraction leads to forgetting one’s flag still perched vertically in the channel pole. The next morning is say, Sunday, and by the time the person on your channel shows up to the field there are dozens of pilots spread about the place. They see your flag in the pole and patiently wait... 15 minutes. Still there. 20... *Still* there. Now a half hour... Still, your flag hasn’t budged!



Now a dilemma: Pack up his plane and not fly at all today or pull a flag (after asking all pilots one at a time if it belongs to them) and *still* risk getting his aircraft shot down out of the sky!

**Make it a part of your shutdown / pack-up checklist: Frequency Flag – check.**

**Always put a clearly marked flag in the channel pole.** Your hand-printing is better than nothing and needs to contain the following two pieces of information at a minimum:

**Your Name and Your Channel Number**

The more information you put on your flag, the easier it is for fellow pilots to identify you if they need to find out who it is that is on that channel, especially when you (we all do from time to time) forget to pull your flag.

**Helpful information in addition to your name and channel number is:**

- Airplane, Heli, or Park Flyer indication.
- Your cell phone number!
- AMA Number
- A picture of you or a picture of your plane, or
- A picture of *you* holding your *plane*!