

Supplementary Instruction CAP 797 FISO Manual



Safety and Airspace Regulation Group

Airspace, ATM & Aerodromes

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Police, HEMS and SAR Callsigns

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Supplementary Instruction (SI) to the Flight Information Service Officer (FISO) Manual (CAP 797) is to detail changes to callsign suffixes of aircraft used in Police, HEMS and Search and Rescue (SAR) activities and the associated procedures detailed within the manual. In addition, this SI also introduces changes to callsigns used in SAR activities.

2 Background

2.1 Following the CAA's review of callsigns and suffixes used in Police, HEMS and SAR operations an airspace policy statement has been published to regulate their use and to introduce improvements.

2.2 This policy statement introduces the following changes to the FISO Manual:

- (1) Police and HEMS aircraft engaged in training will suffix their callsign with the word "zulu" to alert ATS units of the corresponding flight priority;
- (2) Aircraft operators involved in SAR activities will now use the callsign:
 - (a) "British Rescue" when the safety of life is involved, including HEMS emergency operational tasks or humanitarian tasks. The callsign 'British Rescue' may be abbreviated to "Rescue" by ATC/FISOs after initial contact when appropriate within the UK FIR.
 - (b) "Coastguard" when engaged in other tasks, including SAR or HEMS positioning flights, and training flights.

2.3 For further information please review the airspace policy statement, which can be downloaded from the CAA's website using the following hyperlink:

[Policy for the management of Police, Helicopter Emergency Medical Services and Search And Rescue flight callsigns \(Published: 7 July 2023\).](#)

3 Amendment to CAP 797

3.1 With effect from 7 September 2023, the FISO Manual (CAP 797) is amended as shown at [Appendix A](#). This change will be incorporated into CAP 797 in due course.

4 Queries

- 4.1 Any queries or further guidance required on the content of this SI should be marked for the attention of Airspace & ATM Policy and sent to ats.enquiries@caa.co.uk
- 4.2 Any queries relating to the availability of this SI should be marked for the attention of Safety & Business Delivery and sent to ats.documents@caa.co.uk

5 Cancellation

- 5.1 This SI shall remain in force until incorporated into CAP 797 or it is cancelled, suspended or amended.

Appendix A

Section 1, Chapter 3

Police flights

- 3.10 A Police flight is defined as a flight by an aircraft operating under a Police Air Operator's Certificate, the purpose of which is to facilitate police operations, where immediate and rapid transportation is essential, which includes the following:
- (1) Responding to a 'Police Emergency'. The pilot of a police aircraft is likely to declare a "Police Emergency" in situations where an immediate response is required when life is at immediate risk, or a serious crime or major incident is in progress.
 - (2) Supporting ground personnel in often sensitive and serious operations.
 - (3) Non-standard and other flights.
- 3.11 The flight categories relevant to Police flying operations are:
- (1) Flight category A: authorised for use by aircraft which have declared a "Police Emergency". Callsign "POLICE [XX or XXX] Alpha".
 - (2) Flight category B: normal operational priority. The pilot will expect controllers to suggest a new altitude or minor changes to the police flight operating area in the event that the flight would cause a delay to other traffic. Callsign "POLICE [XX or XXX]".
 - (3) Flight category Z: used for training, test and other flights involving police aircraft. Callsign "POLICE [XX or XXX] Zulu".
- 3.12 The callsign for a Police flight consists of three elements:
- (1) The radiotelephony callsign "POLICE". The ICAO three-letter telephony designator is 'UKP'.
 - (2) A two-digit individual aircraft identifier, Exceptionally, sequential three-digit identifiers will be allocated to units operating two or more aircraft. These will consist of a two-digit individual aircraft identifier-based root followed by single digits to reflect the number of aircraft in a regional operation.
 - (3) The two, or three-digit aircraft identifier may be suffixed with a flight category to indicate the priority required by the pilot. Suffix "Alpha" indicates a 'Police Emergency' is in progress. The absence of a suffix indicates the flight is to be handled as flight category 'B'. Suffix "Zulu" indicates flight training, testing or other flights involving Police aircraft.

Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS)

- 3.13 A HEMS flight is a flight by a helicopter operating under a HEMS approval, the purpose of which is to facilitate emergency medical assistance, where immediate and rapid transportation is essential, by carrying medical personnel, medical supplies or ill or injured persons.

3.14 The flight categories relevant to HEMS operations are:

- (1) Flight category A: applies to all HEMS flights on emergency operational tasks. Callsign "HELIMED [XX] Alpha".
- (2) Flight category E: is authorised for use by an aircraft positioning for the purpose of conducting HEMS duties, e.g. returning to its base after delivering a casualty to hospital. It is afforded priority over normal flights. Callsign "HELIMED [XX] Echo".
- (3) Normal flight category: used when SAR aircraft do not require additional priority. Callsign "HELIMED [XX]".
- (4) Flight category Z: used for training, test and other flights involving HEMS aircraft. Callsign "HELIMED [XX] Zulu".

3.15 The callsign for a HEMS flight consists of three elements:

- (1) The radiotelephony callsign "HELIMED". The ICAO three-letter telephony designator is 'HLE'.
- (2) A two-digit individual aircraft identifier allocated to each HEMS aircraft by the CAA.
- (3) The two-digit individual aircraft identifier may be suffixed with the flight category to indicate the priority required by the pilot. Suffix "Alpha", "Echo", or "Zulu" indicates the corresponding flight category. The absence of a suffix indicates the 'normal flight' category.

Search and Rescue

3.16 SAR flights operate to and from incidents where a response is required for the safety of life, which might be time critical and may also involve the transportation of casualties to hospital.

3.17 The callsign used for aircraft engaged in SAR activities is task dependent and will be "COASTGUARD" or "BRITISH RESCUE". 'Coastguard' callsigns can be re-tasked by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) and will adopt the callsign 'British Rescue'. In addition, SAR helicopters may on occasions be required to undertake HEMS tasks and will also use the callsign 'British Rescue'.

The ATSU providing the ATS to the aircraft at the time of the re-tasking (i.e., callsign changing from 'Coastguard' to 'British Rescue') are to inform ATS unit, where one exists, at the departure aerodrome of the change in callsign.

The callsign "BRITISH RESCUE" may be abbreviated to "RESCUE" by an ATSU within the UK FIR when appropriate after initial contact.

3.18 The flight categories relevant to SAR operations and HEMS operations conducted in SAR aircraft are:

- (1) Flight Category A: applies to SAR flights when the safety of life is involved, including HEMS emergency operational tasks. Callsign "BRITISH RESCUE [XXX] Alpha".
- (2) Flight Category B: applies to SAR or humanitarian flights when priority is required. Callsign "BRITISH RESCUE [XXX] Bravo".

- (3) Flight Category E: is authorised for use by SAR aircraft carrying out a positioning flight following a SAR or HEMS task, e.g. returning to its base after delivering a patient/casualty. Callsign “COASTGUARD [XXX] Echo”.
- (4) Normal Flight Category: used when SAR aircraft do not require additional priority. Callsign “COASTGUARD [XXX]”.
- (5) Flight Category Z: used for training and testing flights in SAR aircraft. Callsign “COASTGUARD [XXX] Zulu”.

3.19 The callsign for SAR operations consists of the following elements:

- (1) For “BRITISH RESCUE” callsigns:
 - (a) The ICAO three-letter telephony designator is SRG;
 - (b) A three-digit individual aircraft identifier allocated to each SAR Base and aircraft by the JRCC; and
 - (c) The three-digit individual aircraft identifier will be suffixed “Alpha” or “Bravo” to indicate the corresponding flight category required by the pilot.
- (2) For “COASTGUARD” callsigns:
 - (a) The three-letter telephony designator is SRD;
 - (b) A three-digit individual aircraft identifier allocated to each SAR Base and aircraft by the JRCC; and
 - (c) The three-digit individual aircraft identifier may be suffixed with the flight category to indicate the priority required by the pilot. Suffix “Echo” or “Zulu” indicates the corresponding flight category. The absence of a suffix indicates the ‘normal flight’ category.

3.20 The callsign of SAR aircraft engaged in training and testing will be the base allocated callsign, prefixed with “Coastguard”.