



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

The following document has been prepared as a basic guide for American pilots flying in Canada. This document addresses border crossing procedures and some basic frequently asked questions by pilots that are considering flying North of the border.

This guide is by no means 100% complete. It is just meant as a guide to get you started and should be enough to get you safely and comfortably on your way to exploring what Canada has to offer.

COPA & AOPA have created a very detailed and comprehensive guide to flying across the border which is available online to their respective members. Access to this guide and the other resources is worth the COPA/AOPA membership fees in addition to the fact that both organizations work very hard to protect and preserve our freedom to fly.

If you have a correction or addition to this document please email info@bcaviation.ca



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Northbound

Pre-Flight

- 1. File Departure Notification with eAPIS (Online) *at least 1 hour prior to departure.*
- 2. Receive receipt of eAPIS submission email, "flight is cleared for departure"
- 3. Call Canada Customs, 1-888-CAN-PASS, *2 hours notice required.*
- 4. Must arrive at the CANPASS customs airport +/-30 minutes of the time you specify, otherwise call CANPASS to amend your arrival time.
- 5. File Flight plan with FAA 1-800-WX-BRIEF or any other approved service.
- 6. Ensure that all crew and passengers have passports and that the aircraft is insured.

During-Flight

- 1. On departure, open flight plan with nearest FSS RCO.
- 2. FSS will provide a cross-border squawk code when they open your plan. (Local ATC may change your squawk code, this is OK).
- 3. Contact ATC prior/during border crossing

Post-Landing

- 1. Taxi to Customs box.
- 2. Close flight plan with tower or FSS.
- 3. If no customs officer is present, call 1-888-CANPASS.
- 4. Customs will provide a clearance number, note it in your aircraft journey log.

Southbound

Pre-Flight

- 1. Ensure that all crew and passengers have passports
- 2. Purchase US Customs Decal online. (New decal required each year) If you don't have the physical decal in time, the proof of online purchase will suffice.
- 3. File Arrival Notification with eAPIS (Online)
- 4. Receive receipt of eAPIS submission confirmation email
- 5. Contact US Customs directly to request permission to proceed and coordinate meeting Customs officer, phone numbers listed below. *(1 hour notice required)*
- 6. File Flight plan with Nav Canada
- 7. Must arrive at US customs airport +/-10 minutes of the time you specify, otherwise call US customs to amend your arrival time.

During-Flight

- 1. Ensure tower / FSS knows you are on a flight plan, and opens it.
- 2. Obtain a discrete transponder code
- 3. Contact ATC prior/during border crossing

Post-Landing

- 1. Close flight plan with Seattle Radio or FSS 1-800-WX-BRIEF
- 2. Taxi to Customs box
- 3. Wait in the airplane for customs officer
- 4. Bring Passports, CofA, CofR, Insurance and Pilot License & Medical.



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Airports Where CBP Inspection Services are Normally Available in WA – January 15, 2015				
Airport Name	Code	City	Phone 1	Phone 2
Anacortes Airport	74S	Anacortes	360.293.2331	800.973.2867
Skyline Seaplane Base	21H	Anacortes	360.293.2331	800.973.2867
Bellingham International	KBLI	Bellingham	360.734.5463	800.973.2867
Snohomish County-Payne Field	KPAE	Everett	425.259.0246	800.973.2867
Friday Harbor Airport	KFHR	Friday Harbor	360.378.2080	800.973.2867
Friday Harbor Seaplane Base	WA24	Friday Harbor	360.378.2080	800.973.2867
Roche Harbor Seaplane Base	WA50	Friday Harbor	360.378.2080	800.973.2867
Bowerman Airport	KHQM	Hoquiam	360.532.2030	800.973.2867
Kenmore Seaplane Base	S60	Kenmore	206.553.4406	800.973.2867
Avey Field State K69S Laurier	69S	Laurier	509.684.2100	800.973.2867
Moses Lake	KMWH	Moses Lake	509.762.2667	800.973.2867
Olympia	KOLM	Olympia	253.593.6338	800.973.2867
Dorothy Scott Airport	0S7	Oroville	509.476.2955	800.973.2867
Dorothy Scott Seaplane Base	O06	Oroville	509.476.2955	800.973.2867
William R. Fairchild	KCLM	Port Angeles	360.457.4311	800.973.2867
Jefferson County International	0S9	Port Townsend	360.385.3777	800.973.2867
Renton Municipal	KRNT	Renton	206.553.1971	206.553.1974
Boeing Field-King County	KBFI	Seattle	206.553.1971	206.553.1974
Lake Union Sea Plane Base	KLKE	Seattle	206.553.1971	206.553.1974
Seattle-Tacoma International	KSEA	Seattle	206.553.1971	206.553.1974
Felts Field	KSFF	Spokane	509.353.2956	509.353.2833
Spokane International	KGEG	Spokane	509.353.2833	509.353.2956
Tacoma Narrows	KTIW	Tacoma	253.593.6338	800.973.2867

Airports Where You May Clear CANPASS in BC (Airports of Entry- AOE) – January 15, 2015				
Airport Name	Code	Kelowna Airport	CYLW	
Abbotsford International Airport	CYXX	Penticton Airport	CYYF	
Boundary Bay Airport	CZBB			
Cranbrook Airport	CYXC			
Campbell River	CYBL	Seaplane Base	Code	
Castlegar Airport	CYCG	Bedwell Harbour	CAB3	
Comox Airport	CYQQ	Kamloops Seaplane Dock	CAH7	
Eckhart Airport	K1S1	Nanaimo Harbour	CAC8	
Port Hardy Airport	CYZT	Pat Bay (Victoria Airport)	CAP5	
Prince Rupert Airport	CYPR	Seal Cove (Prince Rupert)	CZSW	
Vancouver International Airport	CYVR	The Spit (Campbell River)	CAE3	
Victoria Airport	CYYJ	Vancouver Airport Seaplane Dock	CAM9	
Nanaimo Airport	CYCD			



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

FLYING TO CANADA FAQ

Q: WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO IF I WANT TO FLY TRANSBORDER FOR SIGHTSEEING BUT DO NOT INTEND TO LAND?

A: If you will not be landing in a country other than the one which you departed you do not need to worry about customs but there are three things that you must do:

1. File & activate a flight plan.
2. Obtain and squawk a discreet transponder code assigned by ATC or FSS.
3. Be in contact with ATC or FSS as you cross the international boundary.

Q: I WANT TO FLY TO ALASKA THROUGH CANADA BUT I HAVE A FIREARM CAN I STILL STOP IN CANADA?

A: Yes, there are provisions for you to fly through Canada with your firearm. The most important thing is that you **DECLARE ALL FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION** to customs the first time you speak with them. You will be required to fill out a form called a RCMP5589 and submit a small fee that will grant you a temporary 60day permit to have your firearm with you in Canada. The process is much simpler for rifles and shotguns and can be very complicated for handguns. If you need your handgun in Alaska it might be best to ship it ahead to your first stop in Alaska and have it waiting for you.

Using the RCMP5589 form you may travel with “non-restricted firearms” for more information on the laws surrounding firearms and what classifies as non-restricted [visit this link](#)

Q: AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL IN CANADA IS PRIVATIZED WILL I BE CHARGED FOR FLYING IN CANADA?

A: If you are simply overflying Canada in your private GA aircraft you will not be charged. Canadian aircraft owners pay a fee of \$70/year for all ATC & FSS services. If you land in Canada you will get a bill for \$18 which will cover you for unlimited use for the calendar quarter in which you first landed. If you land in Canada once every 4 months, then you'll get a bill for each trip but in reality, you are only charged once per calendar quarter. Essentially you are paying the same as Canadian aircraft owners but only 25% at a time. What a deal!

Q: IS THERE CONTROLLED AIRSPACE IN CANADA

A: Yes, once you cross the border it isn't all snow and igloos. 90% of the population in Canada lives within 100 miles of the US border so that is where you will find the largest cities and busiest airspace. Review your maps and ensure that you adhere to the airspace as you would in the United States.

Q: CAN I GET FLIGHT FOLLOWING?

A: Yes, flight following is available just like in the United States, the only difference is that Radar coverage in Canada is much sparser mostly due to terrain. Flight following is available as long as you are in radar coverage which covers most of the southern few hundred miles of the country. The higher you fly the better coverage you will have for flight following.



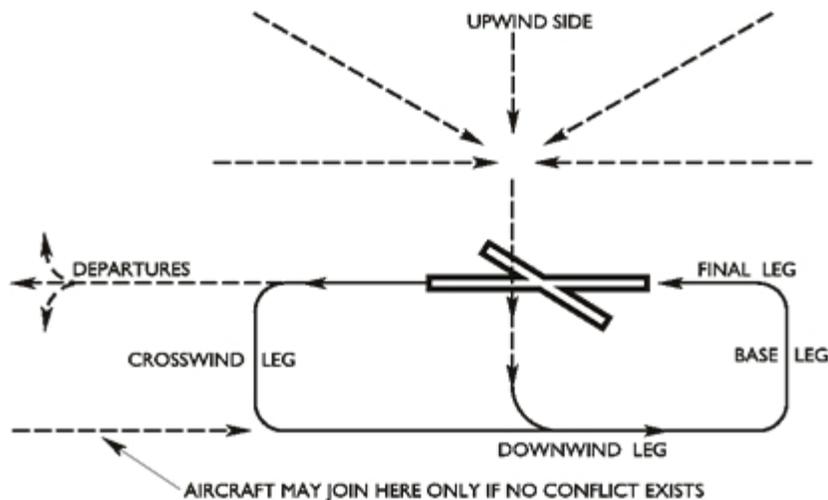
Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Q: IS THE AIRSPACE STRUCTURE THE SAME AS THE UNITED STATES?

A: The Canadian airspace structure is very similar to the United States with some small differences. Here are some of the biggest differences that you should be aware of:

1. In Canada there is no such thing as Class Bravo Airspace below 12,500asl. When you are flying in the vicinity of a large city such as Vancouver or Victoria what you would call “Vancouver Approach” we call “Vancouver Terminal” after all TRACON stands for Terminal Radar Approach Control, we just took the first word in the acronym and the Americans use the third word to identify themselves. Canadian terminal Class Charlie airspace is treated the same as American Class Bravo. You need a clearance to enter and when in the Class Charlie you must maintain the requested altitude and receive a clearance to deviate from the assigned altitude or assigned VFR route. It’s not scary, it’s just different. If you aren’t sure just contact ATC and ask.
2. In the United States you can fly VFR outside of Class Charlie or Bravo airspace up to 18,000’ASL without a clearance all day long. In Canada the ceiling for VFR outside of Class C is 12,500’ASL at which point it becomes Class Bravo and you require a clearance and will be provided the same as IFR separation.
3. There is no such thing as joining a circuit pattern “on the 45” in Canada. You either join on the downwind or from overhead midfield to join mid downwind at circuit altitude. If you are approaching the airport from the same side as the circuit pattern then you should fly over the airport 500’ above the circuit altitude, descend to circuit height on the non-active side and cross back over midfield to join the appropriate downwind. All circuits are left hand unless specified in the PRO section of the aerodrome listing in the Canada Flight Supplements (CFS) the Canadian equivalent of the American AFD. This applies to all uncontrolled airports that are at which an Aerodrome Traffic Frequency (ATF) is in use. In the event that you are flying to an airport that has a Mandatory Frequency (MF) that is manned by a Flight Service Station that provides traffic advisory service, you may fly a straight in approach so long as you conform to the existing traffic in the circuit and contact the Flight Service frequency prior to entering the Class E Zone.





Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Q: DO I NEED TO FILE A FLIGHT PLAN?

A: The Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARS) state that a flight plan must be filed for any flight in excess of 25nm from the airport of origin. Given the vastness of Canada it is very important to file a flight plan and update it if you deviate from it. It is equally important to close it at the end of your flight because Search and Rescue will be activated 1 hour after your ETA. In Canada your flight plan automatically opens at your estimated time of departure and the clock starts ticking on your estimated time enroute. If you are going to be late departing be sure to call flight service and amend your flight plan.

Q: WHAT FREQUENCY SHOULD I USE/MONITOR/BROADCAST ON IN UNCONTROLLED AIRSPACE?

A: In Canada the universal frequency for making position reports outside of controlled airspace where no other frequency is depicted is 126.7 when flying in the vicinity of an uncontrolled aerodrome be sure to broadcast your intentions and position on the closest aerodrome traffic frequency as well. If you have a second radio it is good practice to keep it tuned to and monitor 121.5 for ELTs or emergency broadcasts. Given the vastness of the landscape you may be the only one that hears a MAYDAY call. Also, if you venture into controlled airspace by mistake, ATC will probably try to call you on 121.5.

Q: WHEN ATC CLEARS ME ENROUTE SHOULD I SQUAWK VFR/1200?

A: If you were given a discreet transponder code for your flight and you are cleared enroute and are leaving controlled airspace do not squawk 1200 unless you have been told specifically to do so. Keep your code!

Q: ARE THERE TFRs IN CANADA?

A: In Canada there are not "TFRs" per-se. There are three types of special airspace that you need to be aware of. Be careful because "restricted airspace" in Canada does not show up on Foreflight in the TFR tab so be sure to check your NOTAMS or get a route briefing from flight service. The following airspaces are considered Class "F"

1. CYA – On your map you may see an airspace that has an annotation like CYA188. The "A" stands for advisory. This is airspace that is used for training, hang gliding, parachuting, aerobatics etc.. You may fly through a CYA area at your own risk.
2. CYR – On your map you may see an airspace that has an annotation like CYR109. The "R" stands for restricted. This is airspace that is used by the military usually and may be continuously active or active by NOTAM. If active, you may not fly into the CYR area.
3. Forest Fire Areas – Forest fire fighting airspace is usually NOTAMed and can be obtained from Flight Service. If you see a forest fire you must remain at least 5nm and 3000'agl clear of it even if a NOTAM does not exist.



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Q: WHEN I FLY INTO CANADA WILL CUSTOMS MEET ME AT MY AIRPLANE?

A: It is important that you give the officers at the CANPASS number an accurate arrival time and update it if it is going to change. When you arrive at the predetermined location at the arranged time you may or may not see a Customs Officer. Whatever you do, stay in the airplane! If you do not see a Customs Officer, call 1-888-CANPASS and report your entry over the phone. If a Customs Officer is not coming to meet you, they will give you a report number over the telephone which must be recorded in your aircraft journey log.

Q: DO YOU NEED A 406 MHz ELT TO CROSS INTO CANADA?

A: No you do not. That said it is important to know that the 121.5 signal is no longer monitored by satellite as it once was, so you are dependent on an overflying aircraft to hear the 121.5 alert tone which is why it's important to always monitor 121.5 on your second radio if equipped.

Q: DO YOU NEED TO BE ADS-B OUT EQUIPPED TO FLY IN CANADA?

A: As of the date of this document (July 11, 2018) there is no ADS-B mandate in Canada. It will probably come in the next decade but for now there is no requirement for ADS-B.

Q: IS THERE A SOURCE OF CHARTS / PLATES THAT CAN BE DOWNLOADED FOR CANADA?

A: When flying in Canada it is required that you have access to all the necessary navigational maps and materials for your route of flight including, charts, Canada Flight Supplement (Canadian AFD) etc.. You can purchase and extended subscription from Foreflight which is a bit pricey for Canada or you can use FltPlanGo. The maps are available free of charge on the later APP. I would be remised if I did not say that you should also carry a paper backup which should be available at any online pilot supply store. One important note is that if you are flying in a busy terminal area like Vancouver or Victoria you should have access to both the VNC and the VTA maps. The VTA (VFR Terminal Area Chart) is a smaller scale and has the detail required to navigate the airspace and also has the VFR waypoints depicted.

Q: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EQUIPMENT CODES BETWEEN US AND CANADIAN FLIGHT PLANS?

A: Yes, Canada uses the ICAO equipment codes. FAA equipment codes are not recognized in Canada. The three most common FAA/Domestic Equipment codes are:

FAA	ICAO Equivalent
/G	SGC
/A	SC
/U	SC

If you have a Mode S or ADSB Transponder and are not sure of the equipment code, either look it up or just file as Mode C. using suffix "C". A comprehensive list of ICAO equipment codes is available online.



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Q: WHAT ARE THE SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR AIRCRAFT REGISTRATION NUMBERS WHEN FLYING IN CANADA?

A: In Canada there is a requirement for the aircraft registration marks to be larger than what the American rules permit. That said, the rule only applies to Canadian registered aircraft. If you are visiting and your registration marks meet the American requirements, then you can operate normally in Canada.

Q: WHAT IS THE YELLOW BOX THAT THE US CUSTOMS OFFICERS ARE HOLDING WHEN THEY WALK UP TO MY PLANE?

A: More often than not the United States Customs officers will be holding a yellow Geiger Counter. This device measures and detects radioactive substances in the airplane. If you have recently undergone an x-ray or your aircraft has older instruments that may have glow in the dark radium paint, be sure to let the officer know.

Q: CAN I FLY MY EXPERIMENTAL/AMATEUR BUILT AIRCRAFT ACROSS THE BORDER?

A: Yes, to fly into Canadian or US airspace in an amateur built or ultralight aircraft requires that you include a copy of the appropriate blanket authorization letter to your aircraft documents and abide by the requirements stated in the letter. All you need to do is print off a copy of the blanket authorization and keep it with your aircraft documents. Links are available on the last page of this document.

Q: CAN I FLY ACROSS THE BORDER WITH AN ENHANCED DRIVERS LICENSE AND NO PASSPORT?

A: No, all crew and passengers must have a valid passport when flying in an aircraft across the border.

Q: CAN I FLY TO CANADA WITH A BASIC-MED CERTIFICATE?

A: Due to the non ICAO-compliant nature of the BasicMed regime, Transport Canada does not currently allow aircraft to be operated in Canadian airspace by U.S. pilots flying under BasicMed. **This includes transiting without landing** (i.e. to/from Alaska). COPA is currently collaborating with AOPA and Transport Canada on a way forward which would allow certain BasicMed operations that comply with the restrictions imposed on Canadian Recreational Pilot Permit Holders.

Q: DO I NEED A RADIO STATION LICENSE TO FLY ACROSS THE BORDER?

A: In Canada, Radio station licenses are issued by Industry Canada. Legally, yes you are required to have one when crossing the border. Practically, it is not something that Transport Canada checks and Industry Canada does not conduct ramp checks. Use your discretion but the answer is that legally yes you need one.



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

TIPS FOR A SEAMLESS ENTRY BACK TO THE UNITED STATES

The most complicated part of crossing back into the United States is the acronyms so let's start with the big two.

DTOPS – (Decal & Transponder Online Procurement System)

All aircraft regardless of country of register that are flying into the United States require a DTOPS decal. This decal must be renewed every year and always expires on December 31st. The cost for the decal is around \$40 and can be ordered on the DTOPS website. In the past you could order and pay for your decal at the port of entry but this is not the case anymore. The decals must be ordered online and they take approximately 30 days to ship to your house. If you don't have 30 days that ok. You can order it online and print the receipt and show that to the customs officer as proof that you have ordered and paid for a decal. The decal must be affixed to the aircraft and is not transferrable from aircraft to aircraft meaning that each aircraft that you fly transborder must have its own decal.

EAPIS – (Electronic Advance Passenger Information System)

EAPIS is an online system that must be used for all flights entering the United States. Pilots will need to create an online account and submit all the aircraft data and crew and passenger passport information as well as border crossing times and locations prior to the flight. The website is a bit finicky and can be tricky to use but if you are patient it gets easier each time you use it.

Important information when using EAPIS:

1. Ensure that all your information is spelled correctly, double and triple check! A misspelled name, incorrectly entered passport number or expiration date could land you a \$5000 fine.
2. Take your time and submit early. You can submit your EAPIS 1 to 72hrs prior to your flight. Sometimes the EAPIS submission take a little while to get processed so give yourself lots of time.
3. You **need to submit a new EAPIS** report if:
 - a. You change aircraft
 - b. You add a passenger
 - c. You find a mistake on your first submission with Name spelling, passport info or aircraft info.
4. You do **NOT need to submit a new EAPIS** report if:
 - a. Your departure or arrival change by less than a couple hours. *(Call the customs officer instead)*
 - b. Your departure aerodrome from Canada changes.
 - c. You are leaving a passenger behind that was on the original submission.
5. Once your EAPIS has been processed you will receive an email confirmation. You still need to telephone the US Port of Entry and verbally confirm with a Customs officer that they have your information and that you have permission to proceed with your flight into the United States.
6. When you land in the United States remain in your aircraft with the doors closed until the Customs Officer arrives. Have your license, medical and aircraft Certificate of Registration ready to present to the Officer.
7. When you leave the United States you must file a notice of Departure on EAPIS. The email confirmation is all you need for the Notice of Departure to be approved. No telephone calls required.



Flying From The USA to Canada Border Crossing and Flying FAQs

Updated August 8, 2018

Useful Links and Online Resources

(Clickable Links Available in the PDF Document)

[US CBP DTOPS](#) – Purchase your United States Border Crossing Decal

<https://dtops.cbp.dhs.gov/main/#>

[US CBP EAPIS](#) – File your Electronic Advance Passenger Manifest

https://eapis.cbp.dhs.gov/auth/login.html?resource_url=https%3A%2F%2Feapis.cbp.dhs.gov%2Feapis%2Feapis%2Flogin

[AWWS](#) – Nav Canada Weather Website

https://plan.navcanada.ca/flight/awws_wx_notam

[FOREFLIGHT](#) – iOS app with Canadian charts for a fee

<https://www.foreflight.com>

[FltPlanGo](#) – iOS / Android app with free Canadian Charts

<https://www.fltplan.com>

[RCMP FORM5589](#) – Form to fly into Canada with a non-restricted firearm

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/2347/original/d369a605ac3363b569af5ea5dc40c88d.pdf>

[RCMP GUN LAWS](#) – Link to educate yourself on Canadian Gun Laws

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/information/visit/index-eng.htm>

[CANPASS LANDPLANES](#) – Airports of Entry For Landplanes into Canada

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/do-rb/services/aoe15-eng.html>

[CANPASS SEAPLANES](#) – Aerodromes of Entry For Seaplanes into Canada

<https://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/do-rb/services/aoe15seapl-aoe15hydra-eng.html>

[CBP AIRPORTS OF ENTRY](#) – Airports of entry into the United States

<https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Airports%20where%20CBP%20Inspection%20Services%20are%20Normally%20Available%20%28Jan2015%29.pdf>

[COPA](#) – Canadian Owners & Pilots Association

<https://copanational.org/en/>

[AOPA](#) – Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association

<https://www.aopa.org>

[BCGA](#) – BC General Aviation Association

<https://www.bcaviation.ca>

[COPA/AOPA CROSS BORDER FLYING OPERATIONS MANUAL](#) – Comprehensive Guide To Cross Border Flying

<https://copanational.org/en/flyingtocanada/>

[SPECIAL FLIGHT AUTHORIZATION FOR CANADIAN AMATEUR BUILT AIRCRAFT IN THE USA](#)

https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/gen_av/ultralights/sfa/media/amateur.pdf

[SPECIAL FLIGHT AUTHORIZATION FOR AMERICAN EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT IN CANADA](#)

https://www.faa.gov/aircraft/gen_av/ultralights/sfa/media/tcauth.pdf

[VFR CIRCUIT PROCEDURES AT UNCONTROLLED AERODROMES IN CANADA](#)

https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/services/aviation/documents/TP11541E-Accessible_VFR_procedures_at_uncontrolled_aerodromes_EN.pdf

[TRANSPORT CANADA BRIEF GUIDE TO FLYING IN CANADA](#)

<https://www.tc.gc.ca/Publications/en/tp15048/pdf/hr/tp15048e.pdf>

[TRANSPORT CANADA AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION MANUAL \(AIM\)](#)

<https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/publications/tp14371-menu-3092.htm>

[TRANSPORT CANADA, CANADIAN AIRSPACE DIAGRAM](#)

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/Publications/BIL/TP6010/PDF/HR/TP6010B.PDF>