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Date Issued: 01 MAR 2024

Subject: Hong Kong vACC Pre-Departure Clearance Standard Operating Procedures

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

DOCUMENT NUMBER: HKVACC-SOP007-R3

DATE ISSUED: 01 MAR 2024

REVISION: 3

SUBJECT: Hong Kong vACC Pre-Departure Clearance Standard Operating Procedures

EFFECTIVE DATE: 01 MAR 2024

SCOPE: Outlines standard techniques for issuing pre-departure clearances at aerodromes within Hong Kong FIR on VATSIM.

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets forth the procedures for all controllers providing Clearance Delivery services in order to properly and accurately issue pre-departure clearance.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. The Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for this SOP is the team under the supervision of the Facilities Director. This SOP shall be maintained, revised, updated or cancelled by the Facilities Director. Any suggestions for modification / amendment to this SOP should be sent to the Facilities Director for review.

3. DISTRIBUTION

- 3.1. This SOP is intended for controllers providing Clearance Delivery services within Hong Kong FIR. This SOP remains effective even when the Clearance Delivery position is offline or unavailable.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1. **Pre-Departure Clearance (PDC)** is a method of delivering departure clearance via ACARS or private text message. It substitutes the conventional method of obtaining clearance over the frequency of Clearance Delivery to reduce communication and work required of aerodrome controllers. In the real world, PDC is performed from the data link system of the controller to the dispatch system of the airlines, which then relay the PDC to the flight deck crew via ACARS on the aircraft. This method was first used on VATSIM in 2008.
- 4.2. On VATSIM, private text message is readily available which eliminates the need of installing a separate data link tool by the controller and an ACARS tool by the pilot. Hence, PDCs are typically issued via private text messages in the Hong Kong FIR.
- 4.3. Owing to the growing amount of flight simulator add-ons being equipped with the Hoppie ACARS system, controllers may alternatively issue PDCs through the Hoppie network to pilots who are suitably equipped with the system.

5. PREREQUISITES

- 5.1. Prior to reviewing or referencing this SOP document, controllers shall be proficient in the role of Clearance Delivery. This SOP document does not cover in detail procedures pertaining general knowledge of Clearance Delivery.
- 5.2. This document references other SOP documents. Controllers are expected to be able to locate and review these referenced sections.
- 5.3. Controllers shall utilise the alias file found within the Hong Kong vACC Sector Package in order to issue PDCs through private text messages on EuroScope. *Additionally, controllers are recommended to obtain a Hoppie logon code, which would allow controllers to issue PDCs to pilots connected to the Hoppie network.*

6. GETTING STARTED

6.1. FLIGHT PLAN INSPECTION

- 6.1.1. **When PDCs are in use**, PDC requests from pilots are made through private text messages / the Hoppie network. Requests through the Hoppie network are marked by a flashing yellow **R** in the clearance field of the departure list. Clearance Delivery controllers (referring to anyone providing Clearance Delivery services hereafter) shall review the flight plan for accuracy prior to issuing a Pre-Departure Clearance. This shall be done as if the clearance is issued with the conventional method via the Clearance Delivery frequency. Controllers shall refer to the appropriate SOPs and / or training manuals for methods of inspecting elements within a flight plan.
- 6.1.2. **If a filed flight plan requires necessary amendment, PDCs shall not be issued.** The Clearance Delivery controller shall wait for the pilot to request clearance via the frequency to discuss the needed amendments.

6.1.3. If the flight plan requires necessary amendments, controllers shall use the **“.nopdc”** command within the alias file, which reads:

“PDC REJECTED – FLIGHT PLAN INVALID – REVERT TO VOICE PROCEDURES”

(To use this command, first open a private text channel with the pilot by using **F1 + C** on the keyboard, then select the aircraft. Type **.nopdc** in the text message field and press **Enter** to send.) Refer to Figure 6.3 for an example.

PDC requests through Hoppie can be rejected by right-clicking on the flashing yellow **R** on the departure list and clicking on **Voice**.



Figure 6.1: Example of a Hoppie PDC Request



Figure 6.2: Hoppie PDC Menu



Figure 6.3: EuroScope .nopdc command

6.1.4. If the flight plan is confirmed to be correct, the Clearance Delivery controller shall assign the appropriate **SID, departing runway, initial climb altitude and transponder squawk code**. Controllers shall refer to the appropriate SOP documents for details of this particular step. Controllers shall also note the **current ATIS letter** as it will come in handy in the next step.

6.1.5. PDC does not apply to VFR traffic within Hong Kong FIR.

7. ISSUING PRE-DEPARTURE CLEARANCE

7.1. PDCs contain information found in a conventional clearance over the frequency:

18:45:56 VHHH PDC HKC371 CLRD TO WSSS OFF 07R VIA PECAN1A SQUAWK 5340 NEXT FREQ 122.150 ATIS
A. CLIMB VIA SID TO 5000 FT. ACK PDC. CTC HONG KONG DELIVERY ON 122.150 WHEN READY TO START

Legend: Black = From Alias, Red = Manually Entered, Blue = Generated from EuroScope

7.2. When PDCs are in use, the Clearance Delivery controller shall issue the PDC as soon as the request has been made and the flight plan is inspected to be correct. For aircraft requesting PDC via private text messages, the command ".pdc" shall be used:

.pdc \$time \$dep PDC \$aircraft CLRD TO \$arr OFF \$deprwy VIA \$sid SQUAWK \$squawk NEXT FREQ \$com
ATIS \$1. CLIMB VIA SID TO \$temp. ACK PDC. CTC \$uc(\$radioname) ON \$com WHEN READY TO START

The only string which requires user input is the ATIS letter. For example, if the current ATIS letter is A, then the Clearance Delivery controller shall do the following to issue the PDC:

Press F1 + C on the keyboard and select the aircraft. (This opens a new private message window)
Type .pdc A in the text message field and press Enter.

7.3. Aircraft requesting PDC via the Hoppie network may be given a PDC using the following method:

Right-click on the yellow flashing R in the departure list, which will bring up the Hoppie PDC menu. The ATIS letter shall be inserted into the RMK section (e.g. ATIS A). Then, click on "Send DCL" to send the PDC.

When the PDC has been sent successfully, a grey A will appear in place of the flashing yellow R, indicating that the clearance is pending confirmation from the aircraft. Once the clearance has been acknowledged, the clearance field on the departure list will fill itself and no further action is required from the controller.



\$11 HDA438* A320 VHHH RCKH RASSE1X 07R A50 310 A3505 TSSR A OKI

Figure 6.4: Aircraft with a pending PDC

- 7.4. Aircraft cleared on radar vectors departure shall not be issued PDCs. These aircraft shall have their PDC request rejected through using the **“.nopdc”** command or through the **Voice** button in the Hoppie PDC menu, depending on how they requested their PDC. Their departure clearance shall be issued through the frequency.
- 7.5. Once a PDC has been issued to an aircraft **through private text messages**, the clearance field shall immediately be ticked to remind the controller that clearance has been issued to the aircraft. This is highly encouraged when the Clearance Delivery controller also provides ground control service to the aircraft as a way to keep track of aircraft that have been issued clearance.
- 7.6. Once the PDC has been issued, there is no further action required from the Clearance Delivery controller until the pilot contacts said controller. **If a pilot is unsure of what steps to take next, the Clearance Delivery controller shall explain to the pilot the ensuing steps or refer the pilot to the PDC information page found on the Hong Kong vACC Website.**

Once the PDC has been issued and the pilot contacts the Clearance Delivery controller, the following is an example of what the conversation on the radio between the Clearance Delivery controller and the pilot should look like:

Pilot: “Hong Kong Delivery, Cathay 401, stand E1 with information Bravo”

Controller: “Cathay 401, Hong Kong Delivery, contact Hong Kong Ground on 122.550 for push and start, bye bye.”

8. ACTIONS REQUIRED OF GROUND CONTROLLERS

- 8.1. After an aircraft with PDC has been handed off from the Clearance Delivery controller to the Ground controller, the Ground controller shall treat such traffic no differently from those that received clearance over the frequency. **There is not a different set of procedures required of the Ground controller for aircraft with PDC.**

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 9.1. While PDC is designed as an alternative method to reduce the workload of Clearance Delivery controllers, it is not intended to replace the conventional method of delivering clearances on the frequency. Departure clearance may continue to be delivered through the conventional method over the frequency, although Clearance Delivery controllers are encouraged to use the PDC method, particularly during events or when the traffic volume is higher than usual.
- 9.2. If a Clearance Delivery controller elects to provide PDC service, such controller shall indicate that in their controller information lines when logging in to VATSIM. **Controllers shall not include the Hoppie station name in their controller information if PDCs are not available via the Hoppie network.** See Figure 9.1.



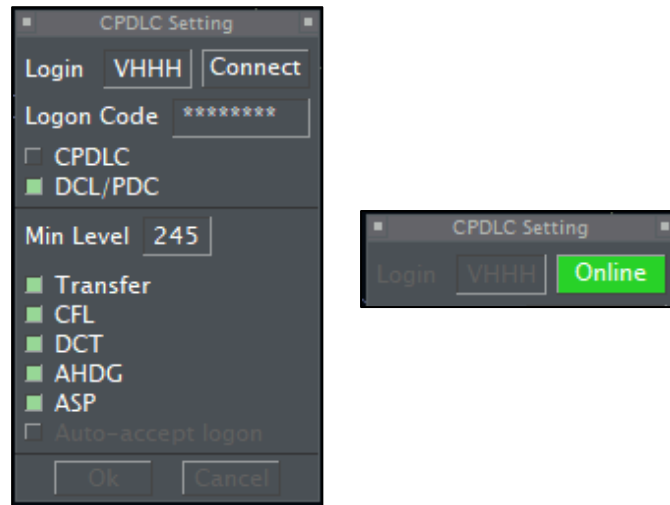
INFO line 2	"Hong Kong Delivery" PDC Available [VHHH]
INFO line 3	Up to date Charts & Procedures - www.ais.gov.hk
INFO line 4	Give feedback on my service - hq.vat-sea.com/atc/feedback

Figure 9.1: Controller Information

- 9.3. Controllers intending to utilise the Hoppie network for issuing PDCs shall first obtain a logon code from <https://www.hoppie.nl/acars/system/register.html>. Once this code has been obtained, it shall be placed in the file named "TopSkyCPDLChoppieCode.txt", found in the Hong Kong vACC Sector Package > Data > Plugins > TopSky.

When the controller connects to VATSIM, they shall log on to the Hoppie network by switching to the Hong Kong TMA ASR (accessible by F1 + 2 on the keyboard), type in their station name (usually the ICAO code of the aerodrome) into the **CPDLC Setting** menu and clicking on **Connect**. If for some reason the **Logon Code** field has not populated with the code from the .txt file / is otherwise incorrect, then the logon code may be placed into the **Logon Code** field. **The CPDLC checkbox shall be left unchecked as the controller is not providing a CPDLC service.**

If the connection is successful, **Online** will be displayed in green in place of the **Connect** button. See Figures 9.2 and 9.3.



Figures 9.2 and 9.3: Hoppie CPDLC Setting Menu

- 9.4. Controllers shall disconnect from the Hoppie network when they are no longer providing a PDC service through Hoppie (e.g. logging off from VATSIM). This can be done by clicking on the green **Online** button again.

RECORD OF REVISION

DATE	REV.	REVISION CONTENT	APPROVAL
1 OCT 2017	1	<p>Added new Section 6.1: Number changed for remaining content of Section 6.</p> <p>Added Section 6.2.5 regarding Flight Plan Unique Identifier (FPUI).</p> <p>Changes to PDC request rejection message.</p> <p>PDC changes from two parts to one part only, and the content of the PDC changes along with actions required of the Clearance Delivery controller.</p> <p>Revised Section 8, Ground controller treats PDC traffic as other traffic with clearance over radio (no differentiation).</p> <p>Added Appendix A.</p>	A. TANG
24 JUN 2020	2	<p>Updated Section 7 such that FPUI is no longer required.</p>	J. CHENG
01 MAR 2024	3	<p>Removed Appendix A</p> <p>Added Section 4.3 (PDCs also available through Hoppie network)</p> <p>Updated Section 5.3 (Recommend use of Hoppie)</p> <p>Updated Section 6.1 (Flight Plan Inspection)</p> <p>Updated Section 7 (Issuing PDCs through Hoppie)</p> <p>Updated Section 9.2 (Controller Information)</p> <p>Added Section 9.3 and 9.4 (Obtaining a Hoppie logon code and connecting to / disconnecting from Hoppie)</p>	T. SIU