

VATUSA Houston (ZHU) and Fort Worth (ZFW) ARTCCs



Letter of Agreement

DISCLAIMER: Information contained in this document is designed specifically for use in a virtual controlling environment on the VATSIM Network. It is not applicable nor should it be referenced for operations in the real National Airspace System.

Effective: 03/19/2017

Subject: Inter-facility Coordination

Signed by ZHU ATM: Brandon Barrett

Signed by ZFW ATM: Brighton McMinn

Signed by VATUSA Southern Region ATD: Kevin Copeland

Letter of Agreement

Purpose of the Letter of Agreement (LOA)

This document establishes inter-facility standard operating procedures to establish coordination between the Houston (ZHU) and Fort Worth (ZFW) ARTCCs on the VATSIM network.

CANCELLATION:

This LOA cancels all prior LOAs and procedures not established herein between ZHU and ZFW.

SCOPE:

This LOA is effective in the airspace of ZHU and ZFW, as well as the mutual border between these facilities.

Responsibilities and Procedures

Unless otherwise coordinated with all applicable controllers, the following procedures shall be complied with for all aircraft operating in the ZHU and ZFW airspace.

BORDER CROSSING PROCEDURES:

- All aircraft operating in ZHU which are destined for the Dallas D10 TRACON and which are operating on IFR arrival procedures which include altitude restrictions shall be issued an instruction to "Descend via the arrival" prior to transferring control to ZFW. "DV" Shall be entered the scratchpad with no temporary altitude.
- All aircraft operating in ZHU which are destined for the Dallas D10 TRACON and which are operating on IFR arrival procedures which do not include altitude restrictions shall be issued a crossing restriction in accordance with the expectation of their filed arrival prior to transferring control to ZFW.
- All aircraft operating in ZFW which are destined for the Houston I90 TRACON and which are operating on IFR arrival procedures which include altitude restrictions shall be issued an instruction to "Descend via the arrival" prior to transferring control to ZHU. "DV" Shall be entered the scratchpad with no temporary altitude.

- All aircraft operating in ZFW which are destined for the Houston I90 TRACON and which are operating on IFR arrival procedures which do not include altitude restrictions shall be issued a crossing restriction in accordance with the expectation of their filed arrival prior to transferring control to ZHU.
- All aircraft operating in ZFW which are destined for the Austin TRACON and which are operating on IFR arrival procedures shall be issued a crossing restriction in accordance with the expectation of their filed arrival prior to

transferring control to ZHU. "DV" Shall be entered the scratchpad with no temporary altitude.

- All aircraft crossing the ZHU/ZFW border and conducting ground operations at airports within 50nm of the ZHU/ZFW border shall be issued an instruction to descend via pilot's discretion with the restriction to maintain 10,000 MSL prior to transferring control.
- Both ZHU and ZFW shall ensure that transfer of both radar identification as well as voice/text communication is complete no later than 5nm prior to the aircraft crossing the border.
- In the event that a non-responsive aircraft is transferred between ZHU and ZFW, the receiving controller shall be notified that the aircraft is non-responsive, and advised of the approximate time elapsed since contact was lost.
- In the event that a non-responsive aircraft is transferred between ZHU and ZFW, the receiving controller shall assume responsibility for ensuring separation between the non-responsive aircraft and other aircraft operating in the receiving controller's' airspace.

Airspace Divisions and Frequencies

Wherever possible, the following airspace divisions shall be used by both ZHU and ZFW in the event that traffic levels require the use of multiple sectors.

ZHU:

1. When ZHU is operating a single center sector:
 - HOU_38_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from SFC to FL600, operating on frequency 126.950
2. When ZHU is operating two center sectors:
 - HOU_38_CTR shall control airspace East of the sector division from SFC to FL600, operating on frequency 126.950
 - HOU_87_CTR shall control airspace West of the sector division from SFC to FL600, operating on frequency 128.600



3. When ZHU is operating top/down center sectors:
 - HOU_38_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from SFC to FL240, operating on

frequency 126.950

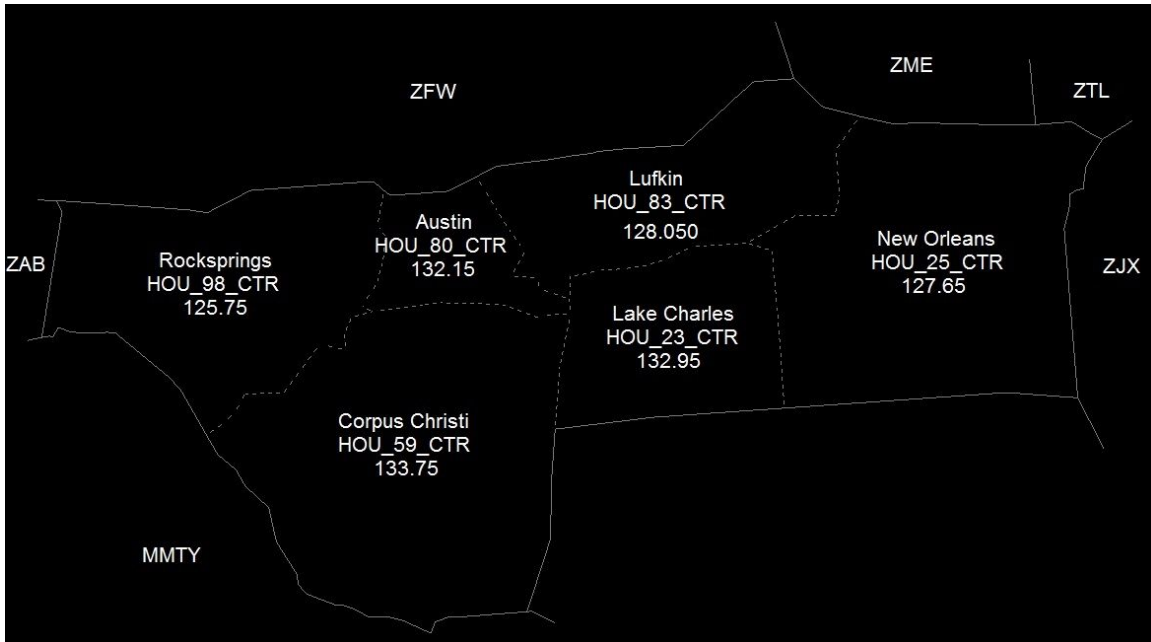
- HOU_80_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from FL250 to FL600, operating on frequency 132.150

4. When ZHU is operating five center sectors:

- HOU_38_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from FL250 to FL600, operating on frequency 126.950
- HOU_87_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from FL250 to FL600, operating on frequency 128.600

Lufkin, Austin, Rocksprings Low

- HOU_80_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from SFC to FL240, operating on frequency 132.150
- HOU_83_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from SFC to FL240, operating on frequency 128.050
- HOU_98_CTR controls all ZHU airspace from SFC to FL240, operating on frequency 125.750



- Note the Gray approach airspace depicted below: Houston Center will have jurisdiction of the Gray approach sector from surface to 12,000 ft. Fort Worth Center will have jurisdiction of the airspace over the Gray RAPCON from 13,000 ft to FL600. Proper handoff procedures must be initiated.



ZFW:

1. When ZFW is operating a single center sector:
 - FTW_46_CTR or FTW_CTR shall control all ZFW airspace from SFC to FL600, operating on frequency 135.750
2. When ZFW is operating two center sectors:
 - FTW_46_CTR shall control airspace East of the sector division from SFC to FL600, operating on frequency 135.750
 - FTW_93_CTR shall control airspace West of the sector division from SFC to FL600, operating on frequency 120.770
3. When ZFW is operating four center sectors:
 - FTW_46_CTR shall control airspace East of the sector division from FL210 to FL600, operating on frequency 135.750
 - FTW_96_CTR shall control airspace East of the sector division from SFC to FL210, operating on frequency 133.300
 - FTW_93_CTR shall control airspace West of the sector division from FL210 to FL600, operating on frequency 120.770
 - FTW_64_CTR shall control airspace West of the sector division from SFC to FL210, operating on frequency 132.600

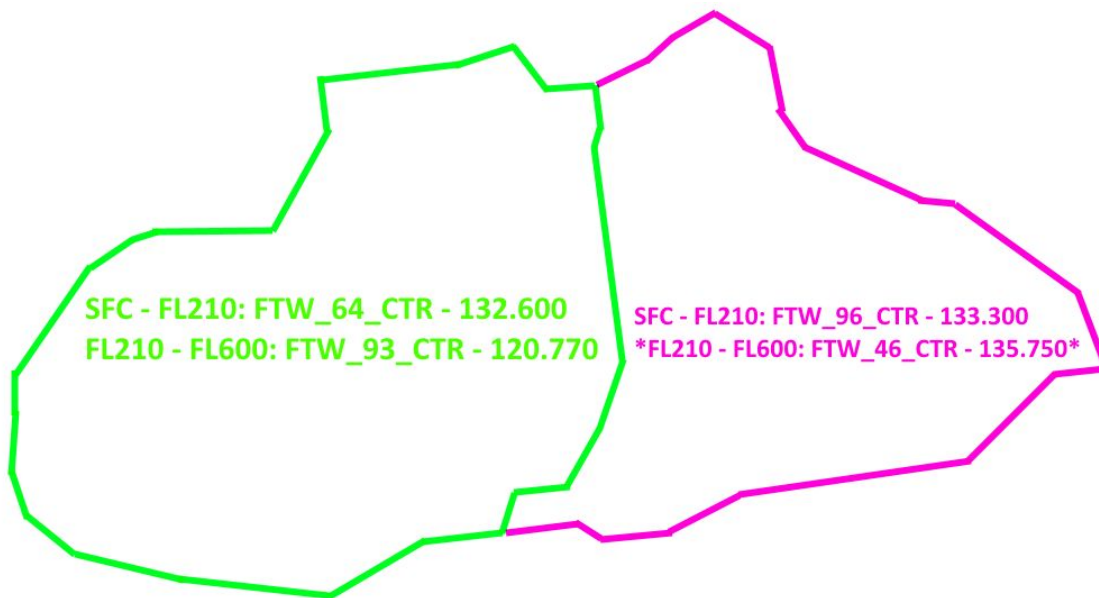


Figure 1 - ZFW Center Splits

Deviations

Deviations from the procedures outlined in this LOA are permissible providing that appropriate coordination is ensured between all controllers involved. If an initiating controller feels that a deviation is required to ensure the expeditious flow of traffic, coordination should be ensured with adjoining sector controllers to ensure the smooth flow of traffic; however such coordination is not required to carry out the deviation.

Special Relationship

It is recognized by both ZHU and ZFW that due to the proximity and similarity of airspace, similarity of procedures and culture, and the mutual desire to improve the online experience of users in the region, a special relationship exists between ZHU and ZFW. In light of this relationship, additional procedures are in place to allow extensive inter-facility cooperation between ZHU and ZFW. These procedures are as follows:

MUTUAL AUTOMATIC VISITING PRIVILEGES:

- All ZHU controllers holding a controller rating of at least S1, and who are certified in the ZHU ARTCC to control minor facilities shall be granted the same privileges in the ZFW ARTCC as visiting controllers. No initiation or request by the controller for these privileges shall be required; the granting of these permissions shall always be automatic and immediate.
- All ZFW controllers holding a controller rating of at least S1, and who are certified in ZFW to control minor facilities shall be granted the same privileges in the ZHU ARTCC as visiting controllers. No initiation or request by the controller for these privileges shall be required; the granting of these permissions shall always be automatic and immediate.

- Automatic visiting privileges shall extend only to minor facilities. Designated airspace as defined by VATSIM GRP shall not be included in this arrangement. Controllers wishing to obtain certification to control major airspace are encouraged to consult the staff of the associated ARTCC to pursue a major airspace endorsement.
- Center sectors shall be treated as major airspace under the terms of this LOA, as both ZHU and ZFW recognize that due to top-down service on VATSIM, a Center certification necessarily requires that the controller be certified for all major airspace within the ARTCC.
- This arrangement may be terminated for specific controllers by the management of the visited ARTCC with cause, however ARTCC management is encouraged to utilize this only as a last resort to ensure the quality of the online experience for all VATSIM users. Wherever possible, this should be avoided.
- All controllers shall be subject to the terms of all VATUSA divisional policies in effect while executing visiting privileges in ZHU and ZFW; notably the VATUSA Visiting Controller Policy.
- Neither ZHU nor ZFW shall enact any minimum activity requirements for visiting controllers certified under the terms of this LOA. All controllers are still bound by the activity requirements of their home ARTCC; however visiting privileges shall not be revoked based on activity levels in the visited ARTCC.

COOPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS:

- All ZHU and ZFW controllers holding an I1 or I3 rating and certified to perform the duties associated with these ratings in their home ARTCC shall be permitted to execute these duties in both ZHU and ZFW airspace with the limitation that the airspace involved may not be designated airspace as defined by GRP.
- All ZHU and ZFW controllers holding an I1 or I3 rating and certified to perform the duties associated with these ratings in their home ARTCC shall be recognized by both ZHU and ZFW as certified Instructors. These individuals shall be regarded as training staff in both ZHU and ZFW, and shall be permitted to execute the privileges associated with their ratings in both ARTCCs. All certified instructors in ZHU and ZFW shall be permitted to provide instruction regardless of the home ARTCC of either the instructor or the student with the limitations that these duties may not include Over The Shoulder (OTS) Examinations, and the instruction provided may not include designated airspace as defined by GRP.
- Certified instructors executing the privileges extended by this LOA shall be bound by the training policies established by the ARTCC of which the student is a member including, but not limited to, scheduling of instructional sessions and the completion of any required documentation regarding instructional sessions which have been conducted.
- Certified Instructors in both ZHU and ZFW shall have all instructional resources made available to them by both ZHU and ZFW upon request.
- Student controllers pursuing instruction in ZHU or ZFW shall have all instructional resources provided by ZHU and ZFW made available to them upon request.
- OTS Examinations may only be conducted by Instructional staff who are members of the same ARTCC as the student in question.
- Instructors may, at their discretion, conduct OTS examinations in either ZFW or ZHU airspace regardless of the student's home ARTCC provided the above requirements are met.
- Student controllers who are not certified for a particular type of facility in their

home ARTCC shall be allowed to control these facilities in the visited ARTCC only when actively engaging in training with a recognized Instructor.

- Instructional Staff for the purposes of this LOA, shall not include Mentors or other controllers not currently holding an I1 or I3 rating.

Reviewed and approved by:



Air Traffic Manager, Houston ARTCC

3/19/2017
Date:



Air Traffic Manager, Fort Worth ARTCC

3/19/2017
Date:

Air Traffic Director, VATUSA Southern Region

Date: