

# **ZME Standard Operating Procedures**

## **Effective 28 MARCH 2009**

The following is a combined SOP for vZME ARTCC. It supersedes all previous SOP. These policies set forth guidelines that protect the commitment and participation of ZME ARTCC controllers as well as the dedication, time and effort put forth by our Instructors and Mentors. Each of us provides our time freely in order to enhance the virtual air traffic controlling experience. We strive to provide the best possible experience for controllers and pilots alike, and we believe these policies will help us achieve these goals.

Activity & Removal	1
Position Signoffs & Training	2
ARTCC Operating Procedures	2
Visiting Controllers	4
Air Traffic Control Procedures	4
ZME Mentor Program	6
Controller Position Duties and Responsibilities	6
Events	8

### **Activity & Removal**

1. In order to be maintained as an active Home Controller you must:
  - a. Have been assigned to the ZME ARTCC by the appropriate channels within VATSIM and VATUSA, and be carried on the ZME website roster
  - b. Log in and actively control at least three (3) hours every 60 days using a valid ZME ARTCC call sign. The OBS call sign does not count toward actively controlling.
    - i. Hours obtained while on the Sweatbox server for training do count as hours toward satisfying the Roster Policy requirements.
  - c. Log 50% of all time as a controller in each calendar month within the ZME airspace.
  - d. Students must contact their mentors/instructors at minimum once a month.
2. EXCEPTIONS
  - a. Crew members who have been granted a Leave of Absence by ZME ATM or DATM (See Operating Procedures, Section 4).
  - b. Crew Members holding an OBS rating (those who have not attained S1) must complete at least 2 training sessions for which they receive evaluations per month until such time as they obtain an S1 rating and can man a live VATSIM position. Thereafter the normal provisions of the Activity Requirements shall apply.
  - c. Visiting Controllers must meet the activity requirements set forth in the Visiting Controllers section of this SOP.
3. Special circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but you must communicate them with the Staff.
4. The following conditions shall, at the discretion of the ZME Staff, constitute cause for removal of an individual from ZME:
  - a. A period of inactivity of 90 days or greater. ZME uses the VATSIM data servers to keep a record of all logins. ZME members who fail to log at least 3 hours at a controlling position in a 60 day period will be considered inactive and issued an inactive date. In order to return to the active roster, the controller must

accumulate 3 hours at a controlling position within the proceeding 30 days of the inactive date listed on the roster. Failure to comply will result in removal.

- i. Exception: New ATC's with an OBS Rating must have demonstrable training activity, in the form of a minimum of 2 training sessions within the first 30 days of being added to the ZME roster on VATUSA. Crew Members not meeting this requirement are subject to removal from the roster without further notice.
- b. Suspension from VATSIM.
- c. Willful failure to comply with ZME policies or procedures.
- d. Failure to be considerate and respectful of all ZME controllers and staff.
- e. Participation in activities designed to cause undue stress or hardship on another controller while controlling, mentoring, instructing or flying.
- f. Failure to comply with the VATSIM Code of Conduct.
- g. Controlling under the influence of a mind altering substance.

### **Position Signoffs & Training**

1. In order to work a position (DEL, GND, TWR, APP, or CTR) without being monitored by an Instructor or Mentor, a controller must have a valid signoff on the position that they intend to work.
2. This policy applies to both Home and Visiting controllers.
3. Position signoffs will be granted by Mentors and Instructors with the exception of MAJOR Endorsements, LCTP Endorsements, and CTR Certifications, which can only be granted by Instructors.
4. In order to get a signoff a controller must be proficient in the area he is working given a normal network traffic load.
5. Training to obtain a position signoff will be in accordance with the VATUSA Training Regulations, latest revision and is available in the documents section of the ZME website.

### **ARTCC Operating Procedures**

1. **Promotions and Testing** will be conducted in accordance with the published ZME Training Procedure, latest revision.

2. **Position Restrictions and Guidelines**

Clearance Delivery / Ground / Tower

- Any ZME member or visitor holding the rank of Student (S1) and a position signoff for the position to be manned. Member must hold MAJOR Endorsement to control at KMEM.

Approach / Departure

- Any ZME controller or visitor holding the rank of Senior Student (S3) and an APP position signoff. Member must hold an LCTP endorsement to control at the KMEM TRACON.

Center

- Any ZME controller holding the rank of Controller (C1) and above.
- Any Visiting Controller holding the rank of Controller (C1) and a signoff at the position to be controlled.

### **POSITION PRIORITY**

Even and prudent staffing of the airspace is a primary means of generating and attracting traffic into the ARTCC. The following is a guide of ARTCC Management preferred order of position staffing. Controllers are asked to login to the highest available position on the

following list that they are certified for given a normal traffic load (non-event or special circumstances).

1. MEM\_05\_CTR
2. MEM\_E\_APP
3. BNA\_W\_APP
4. MEM\_L1\_TWR
5. MEM\_04\_CTR
6. Any Other Class C Approach
7. Any Other Class C Tower
8. MEM\_L1\_GND
9. Any Other Split Position
10. Any Other Available Position

Exceptions:

- ZME staff members, instructors, and mentors may login at any available position of their choosing.
- Event CIC's & Staff Members may change this order as needed to compensate for facility specific events, abnormally high traffic loads, etc.

### 3. **Forums**

- a. Membership on the ZME Forum is required of all active Home Controllers.
- b. Etiquette: The Forum serves as a communications vehicle for all ARTCC interfaculty matters. Open discussions are encouraged, however "flames" or any other derogatory remarks will not be tolerated.
- c. Attachments: Attachments are not allowed.
- d. Violations: Violators shall receive one (1) warning from a moderator or the administrator. Further violations could result in expulsion from the Forum. Since Forum membership is required of ZME members, expulsion from the Forum will result in removal from the ZME ARTCC roster.

### 4. **Leaves of Absence**

- a. Any Student, Controller, Mentor, or Instructor may request a leave of absence (LOA) in writing. Requests should be sent to either the ATM or DATM, and should give an estimated length of leave, not to exceed 180 days, and a brief reason. (The reason does not need to be so specific that they reveal personal information.)
- b. During their leave of absence, a member is relieved of all responsibilities of their position.
- c. The member must contact the ATM or DATM if the leave needs to be extended.
- d. The member must contact the ATM or DATM when they return.
- e. Senior Staff (ATM, DATM, TA, and EC) automatically forfeit their staff position for any LOA exceeding 60 days unless otherwise approved by the ATM.
- f. After 180 days, controllers are subject to refresher practical testing to ensure crew member's ability to provide air traffic control services

### 5. **Transfers into ZME :** Transfers to the ZME ARTCC can be denied for any one or more of the following reasons:

- a. The candidate has a disciplinary record within their present ARTCC
- b. The candidate was a former member of ZME who was dismissed or transferred out of ZME for disciplinary reasons or reasons related to inactivity.
- c. The candidate has shown a disrespectful attitude toward other controllers, either in direct communication or in postings on a forum.
- d. The candidate has shown a disrespect of the policies and procedures of either the current ARTCC or ZME ARTCC.

- e. The candidate has fostered an environment that affects the normal function of the ZFW ARTCC through actions and/or words and causes disruptive game play to other players connected to the VATSIM network

## **Visiting Controllers**

Controllers from outside ARTCCs are welcomed and encouraged to augment the ZME roster. Visiting Controllers shall adhere to the VATUSA Visiting Controller Policy 07/06. To provide consistent service to pilots, those controllers will additionally be required to adhere to the policies set forth in this SOP as allowed in parts 2 and 6 of the VATUSA Visiting Controller Policy 07/06, to include:

1. Apply via the ZME website for visiting controller status.
2. Successfully pass the SOP examination.
3. Visiting controllers will be automatically signed off for positions as appropriate for their current rating assuming they are active and current in their home ARTCC, except that an instructor 'checkout' is required for MAJOR facilities, LCTP facilities, and the CTR position.
4. Control for 1 hour per month on a valid ATC position at ZME.
5. Spend some time at the ZME web site and familiarize yourself the procedures, frequencies, facilities, LOAs, and policies.
6. Be courteous to all Roster Controllers, staff and pilots that fly into the airspace.
7. Do not control ZME airspace during a scheduled event without prior consent from a ZME staff member.
8. Ask a staff member questions regarding handling a specific situation.
9. Exercise caution and prudence when required. As a Visiting Controller, you may not be fully informed about ZME or its procedures.
10. Remember that you are representing ZME during your controller sessions. The management here at ZME does not tolerate cavalier attitudes or any actions that would present ZME in a negative light.

Visiting Controller status may be rescinded at the discretion of the ATM or DATM.

## **Air Traffic Control Procedures**

1. **Logging In:** Controllers should make themselves familiar with all pertinent information regarding the facility they will be manning. This includes checking NOTAMS, weather information, and traffic levels. Controllers should follow the vZME Plug-in SOP when relieving a controller. Controllers should log on with intention of providing ATC service for no less than 30 minutes. Real world NOTAMs should be implemented reasonably and with common sense into virtual operations so as not to unduly impair network operations. Controllers shall login on a position according to the ARTCC Operating Procedures in this SOP.
2. **ATIS:** Voice ATIS shall be set up in accordance with the VATSIM Code of Conduct, Section C(11). Additionally, controllers should use the following guidelines in an ATIS:
  - a. Text portion of ATIS not to exceed 4 lines, with a maximum of 64 characters per line
  - b. Refer to the ZME website positions table for valid ATIS frequencies
3. **Callsigns:** When logging on at a position, controllers should refer to the ZME website positions table procedures for approved callsigns and frequencies.

4. **Voice Channels in the Radar Client:** When using voice as a means of communications controllers must set their voice channel in VRC/ASRC. When configuring a voice channel, controllers should set the voice server to rw.liveatc.net. The voice channel should be set the same as the controller callsign in lower-case letters. E.g. a controller is logged in as MEM\_E\_APP, the voice channel should be /mem\_e\_app
5. **Coordination:** ZME uses the intercom feature within ASRC/VRC, private text, and TeamSpeak, as means of coordination between ATC facilities within and surrounding ZME airspace. Controllers should refer to the radar client documentation on how to set up the communication panel.
6. **Visibility Range:** When logging onto a position controllers should limit their visibility range to the following maximum values:
  - a. Center – 400nm
  - b. Approach/Departure – 100nm
  - c. Tower – 20nm
  - d. Delivery/Ground – 10nm
7. **Logging Off:** Controllers should use the .break function no less than 5 minutes before closing a facility. This allows other controllers to see your intentions of leaving, and if they wish to take the position, relieve you. This will allow approximately 5 minutes for the relieving controller to vacate their present position and receive a briefing prior to taking over. If a facility is to close, the controller should send a text message to all tracked aircraft using the .pan feature notifying aircraft that ATC services will be terminated for that facility. If using voice, the controller should also issue verbal announcement stating that the facility is closing. If being relieved, the outgoing controller should handoff all tracked aircraft to the relieving controller.
8. **Relieving a Controller:** Controllers should use common sense and courtesy when relieving another controller or opening a position under an already manned facility (e.g. opening Approach when Center is online). The controller being relieved should give a brief description of the overall situation (adjacent facility staffing, weather, runways in use, temporary restrictions, trends or pireps, and any training in progress) at the facility and the status of each aircraft to be transferred to the relieving controller. The relieving controller should make a formal final acknowledgement that he/she has control of the airspace and has no further questions. When relieving a position, the primary position frequency & voice channel should be used.
  - a. Example: If MEM\_04\_CTR logs on for the purpose of relieving MEM\_05\_CTR, the controller signing in as MEM\_04\_CTR should use 133.650 as their frequency with MEM\_05\_CTR as the voice channel.
9. **Relief Callsigns:**
  - a. Center: The combined primary Center position is MEM\_05\_CTR with MEM\_04\_CTR being the relief callsign.
  - b. KMEM/KJAN TRACON: East Approach is the primary, West Approach is the relief
  - c. KMEM TOWER/GROUND: L1/G1 is the primary, L2/G2 is the relief
  - d. KBNA/KLIT TRACON: West Approach is the primary, East Approach is the relief

## **ZME Mentor Program**

The Memphis ARTCC Mentor program is adopted to involve the controllers in the training of students here at the ARTCC. It allows the student to work with seasoned controllers while gaining experience on the network. In addition, it allows the TA and staff instructors to be more effective. Finally the mentor program allows for training to take place when there is no instructor available.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Must hold a C1 rating. And can only train on a position he/she is approved to control.
2. Must be recommended by the TA or an instructor and approved by the TA or ATM.
3. Must be in good standing with ZME and VATUSA, with no disciplinary record, exceptions may be made by ZME staff.
4. Must adhere to ZME policies and training procedures laid out by TA and approved by ATM and use appropriate training materials.
5. Must log each mentor session on ZME website for that day.

The ATM, DATM, or TA may remove a controller from the Mentor Program at anytime.

### **Requirements:**

1. Mentors must be available to mentor a minimum 2 sessions per month. A session may be classroom and/or OJT.
2. Help develop the capabilities of ARTCC members.
3. Help with the assessment of controller's abilities and makes recommendations for promotions and control positions for events.
4. Grant signoffs for position certifications (except for MAJOR, LCTP, and CTR Positions)

## **Controller Position Duties and Responsibilities**

### **Clearance Delivery**

Clearance delivery is responsible for issuing IFR clearances for all departing IFR aircraft. Clearance delivery should advise pilots of any expected delays, significant weather, or other pertinent information. Clearances should be in accordance with the Letters of Agreement that we have with surrounding ARTCCs. Clearance delivery should not track any aircraft.

#### *Operational:*

1. Delivery shall ensure that all departing IFR aircraft are issued a valid clearance.
2. Delivery shall issue IFR clearances in accordance with the proper LOA.
3. Delivery shall issue a proper initial altitude according to the departure procedure used to departing IFR aircraft.
4. Delivery shall issue a discrete squawk code for VFR departures from Class B and C airports.

### **Ground**

Ground control is responsible for the movement of all traffic on the ground at the airport except for the active runways. Ground should maintain communication with tower to receive current runway information. Ground should make sure all IFR aircraft have received an IFR clearance. Ground should not track any aircraft.

#### *Operational:*

1. Ground shall issue taxi clearances using taxiway designations when other aircraft are in the local area.
2. Ground shall provide progressive taxi to aircraft requesting the service or to pilots unfamiliar with the airport.
3. Ground shall notify tower of any aircraft that were told to "monitor tower".
4. Ground shall taxi GA aircraft to an FBO or suitable parking, and air carriers to the proper terminal.

### **Tower**

Tower is responsible for all movement and activities on all active runways and the area immediately surrounding the airport, usually 5nm radius and up to 2,500' AGL. Tower is responsible for clearing aircraft for takeoff and landing. Tower should also handoff departing aircraft to departure as soon as the aircraft is airborne. Tower should maintain communication with ground and approach/departure.

#### *Operational:*

1. Tower shall issue an initial heading to departing IFR aircraft as necessary.
2. Tower shall provide takeoff and landing clearances, and ensure runway separation
3. Tower shall maintain the airport Voice ATIS
4. Tower shall determine the active runway[s] and inform approach/departure.

### **Departure**

Departure is responsible for separating and sequencing all departing aircraft through an appropriate departure gate. Often approach and departure are consolidated, other times it shares the same airspace with approach, and therefore must maintain constant communication with approach. Departing aircraft should be kept out of the path of arriving aircraft. Departure should maintain communication with tower, approach, and center.

#### *Operational:*

1. On initial contact, departure shall issue radar contact after radar identifying an aircraft. Departure shall climb an aircraft to an intermediate altitude [See pertinent LOA] before handing the aircraft off to center.
2. Departure shall vector an aircraft to join a SID, if one was filed and/or issued. Aircraft not filing a SID shall be vectored through the appropriate departure gate.
3. Departure shall ensure that aircraft are on course or are on a vector to join its course before initiating a handoff off to center. If an aircraft is on a heading when handed off to center, departure should instruct the aircraft on initial contact with center to check in with their assigned heading.
4. Departure shall ensure that handoffs are initiated to enroute control no less than 10nm or 1 minute from the airspace boundary, and no less than 1000' below the intermediate altitude if possible.

### **Approach**

Approach is responsible for separating and sequencing all arriving aircraft safely and efficiently. Approach assures that any arriving aircraft will not conflict with any departing aircraft. Approach will also handle any aircraft remaining in the traffic pattern to sequence them in with other arrivals. Approach should maintain communication with tower, departure, and center.

#### *Operational:*

1. On initial contact, approach shall issue an altimeter setting and approach to expect for IFR arrivals and any other pertinent information if no ATIS is available. If an ATIS is available and an aircraft does not check in with the current ATIS, approach should instruct the aircraft to obtain the current ATIS.
2. Approach shall radar identify arriving aircraft before issuing any instruction.
3. Approach shall insert runway and approach information in the scratchpad portion of the flight plan that will show in the aircrafts datablock [Refer to Datablock Inserts].
4. Approach shall ensure that radio contact is handed off to local control in a timely matter.

### **Center**

Memphis center is responsible for all other airspace and air traffic within the Memphis ARTCC boundaries. Center handles all enroute aircraft. Center performs the duties of approach/departure, should they not be online. Center may or may not provide services to Class D airports on a traffic-permitting basis or at the discretion of the controller. Center also issues crossing restrictions to aircraft on a STAR. Center should maintain communication with approach, departure, and adjacent ARTCC's.

#### *Operational:*

1. On initial contact, center shall issue a current altimeter setting of a nearby station to all aircraft below FL180.
2. On initial contact from a departing aircraft, Center shall climb aircraft up to FL230 or their cruise altitude, whichever is less. If the aircraft has filed for a cruise altitude higher than FL230, Center shall climb the aircraft to that altitude prior to reaching FL230.
3. Center shall ensure that all IFR aircraft are squawking a valid and discrete code.
4. Center shall ensure that all VFR operations are conducted clear of Class A airspace.
5. Center shall ensure that aircraft are at a proper altitude for their direction of flight.
6. Center shall ensure that all IFR flights have filed an IFR flight plan. If the flight strip indicates VFR the controller shall amend the strip to indicate IFR.
7. Center shall ensure that handoffs are initiated to the receiving facility no less than 10nm or 1 minute from the airspace boundary, and ensure that the aircraft complies with any crossing restriction or pertinent LOAs if applicable.
8. Center shall disseminate pertinent weather information to all aircraft on frequency. This information includes: Center Weather Advisories [CWAs], SIGMETS, and Convective SIGMETS.
  - a. CWAs can be found at <http://aviationweather.gov/products/cwsu/dynamic/kzme.shtml>
  - b. SIGMETS and Convective SIGMETS can be found at <http://adds.aviationweather.gov/>
9. Only weather information which effects ZME airspace or areas immediately surrounding ZME airspace should be disseminated.

### **Events**

This policy summarizes some of the factors that will be used in determining positions for major events. Major events are ones in which multiple positions are required.

1. Controllers should sign up for event positions on the ZME website.
2. The week before the event staff and instructors may hold short ground schools on each position. If you request a position you may be required to attend at least one night of ground school for event procedure and/or position information.
3. A controller's past activity online will be considered for position assignments.
4. A controller's rank will be considered for positions assignments.
5. A controller's ability in a position will be considered.
6. Coordinating staff can assign/reassign/remove any controller position as they see necessary; controllers may be cycled into or out of positions during events.

Revised March 28, 2009, by:

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