

THE WESTWIND JOURNAL

State of the Airline | MeetMe Column | Cockpit Chatter

WestWind Airline Stats - YTD

Total Flight Hours:	6,902
Total Offline Hours:	5,628
Total Online Hours:	1,274
Total Flights:	2,150
Total Cargo (lbs.):	25,003,163

WestWind Hub Rankings

February

Top 3 Hubs by Total Hours

1 - Miami	430
2 - Denver	285
3 - Singapore	264

Top 3 Hubs by Total Flights

1 - Miami	108
2 - Cincinnati	102
3 - Denver	80

Top 3 Hubs - VATSIM Hours

1 - Las Angeles	119
2 - Calgary	87
3 - Cincinnati	62

WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

By Sean McConnell, President and CEO



This is a summary of the detailed department reports I have received from each member of the Executive Committee highlighting 2024 accomplishments and 2025 goals for each department. Their reports totaled over 25 pages and more than 1,000 pages of supporting documents. So the best I can do is go over the highlights of those reports.

At the close of 2024 WestWind had 120 Active pilots out of our 3,090 pilots on our roster. This is the lowest I have seen it since I have returned to WestWind in 2006. I know real life gets in the way of this hobby of ours and not much we can do about that. But the Executive is looking at other factors and deciding what can be done to address those issues. At the end of the year we had 46 inactive (have not flown more than 60 days) and 2,916 retired pilots (more one year since last flight). The status change is automated to take some of the load off of the Hub Managers. There is a LOT of work to do in many areas and in some cases progress appears painfully slow. But I do see progress none the less.

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WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

WestWind hired 9 new pilots in 2024 and 5 still active. The Marketing Department recently hired Don Tinc as the Director of Marketing. Don will be responsible for the marketing efforts of WestWind and has already brought new life to our Facebook group and contributed to our YouTube channel. WestWind also has a Discord Channel "WestWind "The Closet"" which is intended to provide Voice communications between members. You can find the invite link in the forums. The TeamSpeak channel was financed out of pocket by our previous President and I have no way of taking over responsibility of that account. Nor do I have any ideal how long the TeamSpeak server will stay up. Discord will give us the same voice capabilities as TeamSpeak for no cost. Hopeful the the Marketing Department efforts will lead to more pilots both old returning and new pilots coming on.

WestWind Pilots logged a total of 11,369 flights and 37,804 hours using various flight simulators including FS2004 (AKA FS9), FSX including Steam edition, MSFS 2020 and X-Plane 12. MSFS 2024 became available in November of this year although its launch did not go as planed. It still has potential and we have added it to our list of available simulators. While the total flights and hours show a continuation of a downward trend of the last 5 years, there is good news that fewer pilots have been more productive over the last few years. With a flight to pilot ratio of about 65:1 this trend has been on the rise over the last 5 years.

Our hub population has gotten way out of balance with 4 hubs that have 12 plus pilots and 3 hubs only have a few pilots. I do not feel it is fair to ask a hub with only 3 or 4 pilots to compete against a hub with 12 or more pilots for flight hours or number of flights. I am purposing the the top 3 hubs plus any ties, currently Chicago, Miami, Cincinnati, and Denver as full and discourage any more pilots at these hubs. While the bottom three, currently Atlanta, Amsterdam, and Singapore with only 3-5 pilots can use more pilots. I will give a shout out to Bob Sturm and the Singapore hub for placing 4th on the hub leader board in 2024 for overall hours in spite of only having 5 pilots. I also asked George to reopen the second and third choices on the pilot application so that we can place new pilots where they are most needed. This should also help weed out the robot or AI pilot applications.

WestWind Executive Charter Division logged a total of 3,364 flight and 9,112 hours. Again this is down from the previous year do to less active pilots and continues the downward trend of the last 5 years. Interestingly the Charter Flights to pilots ratio is up to about 35:1 and shows the same trend over the past 5 years. Fewer Pilots are flying more flights. WestWind has nearly 360 passenger charters and over 70 cargo charters to chose from. Use the search function to find one that may fit or contact our Chief of Operations with your charter idea.

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WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

I will mention a couple of add-on products that I personally use that Phil has set up charters for, The first is "A Pilots Life:Chapter 2" You start out as a Junior First Officer at a small airline and work your way up both rank and larger and more popular airlines as you gain experience. I often find one of our scheduled flights match up with the A Pilots Life generated schedule and choose the WestWind scheduled flight. But if the A Pilots Life schedule does not match up just sign out on the A Pilots Life Charter.

The second one is "Air Hauler 2" I started a Virtual Cargo company for WestWind pilots on an experimental bases which took off well with just a few pilots doing 99 percent of the hauling. With just Three pilots WestWind's Air Hauler 2 company has been one of the top three companies with in the Air Hauler Virtual companies. And a couple of us have been idle for a little bit, so I can see WestWind Air Hauler company taking the top spot again soon.

WestWind Regional Airlines was slow for 2024 with only 2 pilots flying 10 flight for Alaska Regional. 2024 was the first Full year for Tahiti Regional. Tahiti Regional is working on an experimental basis making Christmas in Tahiti Charters and other regional flights available offering seasonal routes between October thru March of each year. But the routes are unofficially available for the entire year. And I plan on adding more routes to Tahiti Regional through out the year as I have time. Pilots are not assigned to a Regional Airline but anyone can sign out on a Regional Airline flight by clicking on Flight Dispatch on the home page, then Sign out a Flight on the side menu, then Regional routes on the next side menu, and select the regional airline to bring up the routes for that region. There is also a option for Regional charters. Both the Charter and Regional Airlines are a work in progress so keep an eye open for changes/updates.

WestWind Online Operations and Events division oversees online flights, IE flights connected to VATSIM (Virtual Air Traffic Simulation) and IVAO (International Virtual Aviation Organization) Online ATC services. WestWind is a Partner Virtual Airline in good standing with VATSIM. However WestWind is not Certified with IVAO and do to IVAO current rules and Regulations, WestWind does not have any plans to pursue any designations with IVAO in 2025. You are welcome to use IVAO but we do not have an official relationship with them.

In 2024, we saw over 3,800 hours and over 1,400 flights online with VATSIM from 42 pilots and 3 pilots flew 42 flights for 80 hours on IVAO.

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WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

The Events side covers both online and offline events and oversaw 3 events in 2024, The Great Australian Air Rally (Co-Hosted with Bluegrass Airlines). Christmas In Tahiti. And Operation Eastwind Hurricane Helene & Milton Relief. I must give Our Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Pilot credit for the success of Operation Eastwind in 2024. Borrowing a page from the early events and giving some structure to the flights within the operation and setting a goal of what we wanted to achieve with the event. It was a learning process for sure but I believe Operation Eastwind would not have achieved the same level of success without those flights offering some guidelines to what was expected. Operation Eastwind is not slowing down in 2025 either as it just wrapped up support for the Los Angeles County wildfires. We also officially added a new type of charter/mission of dropping water on active wildfire locations. Both the COO and CAO will keep an eye out for other opportunities for Eastwind operations.

Airline Awards, wow 746 awards given out in 2024. That is too many to list, as the Awards Director also said. But some highlights are 93 Years of Service Awards ranging from 2 years to 25 years of WestWind service. 20 pilots received 15 years of service and 7 pilots received 25 years of service. Note that the time of service clock does not pause or stop when you go inactive or retire. Brian Ware was 2023 Aviator of the year, and Gerald Spires the Highest online hours for 2023, Both Awarded January 2024. Bob Sturm received 10 of the 12 2024 Charter pilot of the Month awards. Brian Ware and Hal Morse won the other 2. 4 pilots received award for 1,000 flights logged and 1 with 2,000 flights logged. 3 pilots received awards for 3,000 flights. 2 pilots passed the 10,000 flight hours and one passed the 20,000 flight hours. We may need to make new awards so these pilots can keep going. Like Phil and I both said the number of awards issued is too big to list them all and I hope 2025 is more of the same for awards. Keep up the excellent work.

Some of our awards are based on distance flown, and back in 2023 the Chief Operations Officer started adding Airport Codes to the airport data base that was flown to but not in our system. We are still getting a few airports in the flight records that are not in the data base. And in 2024 he has gone back to add missing airport information such as longest runway and airport type IE Sea Plane base or Helicopter pad. Everyone can help out here, if you sign out on a flight and see just the ICAO code for the airport in "(KATL)" in the Origin or destination fields, the airport is not in our data base and needs to be added. Whereas, "Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America, (KATL)" in the field is in the database and we do not need any other information for it. Anyone can add an airport and a member of the EC will review the data and approve it or send it back to the pilot with suggested edits/correction.

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WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

We can not edit the submitted airports be can id issues with the data and ask the pilot that submitted the info to correct and resubmit it. The most common reason is the lat/long missing the minus sign when for the Southern or Western hemispheres. We will not actually reject an airport if it actually exist but will ask for information correction. If you are flying a bush flight where the location is not an actual airport you can give the Chief Operations Officer as much information as possible about the location, and he or I can research and advise how we want you to inter the information. Weather it be a flight note with Lat/Long stop point or new airport entry.

I mentioned simulators above and it no surprise that MSFS 2020 was the most used simulator across the board. MSFS 2020 has brought back a hand full of pilots out of retirement as well as a few new pilots. I am sum-what surprised that FSX/FSX:Steam Edition still has a solid hold on to second place over X-Plane 11/12. And FS9 edged out P3D for the forth most used simulator.

As I mentioned above the 2024 edition of MSFS launch was not what anyone hoped for. But they did fix the issues that was preventing pilots for downloading and flying on day one and had things going somewhat smoothly within a few days. I waited a couple of days before downloading and running MSFS 2024. I do like the idea of a career mode in the sim. Don Tinc our new marketing director has already presented ideas to the EC for MSFS 2024 and we are discussing those ideas. Looking at the data from November 2024 through January 2025, MSFS 2024 has already passed FS9, P3D, and X-Plane 11 on the usage chart. One problem with aircraft that has been brought up by many users is that the aircraft are locked out preventing us from using WestWind livery in the new simulator. You are welcome to use our fall back clause and use a default Manufactures livery as long as the air frame is listed in our aircraft database AKA our Hanger.

I still get suggestions to drop "Old Archaic" flight simulators such as FS2004 AKA FS9 and FSX. My answer is we will when they are no longer used by our pilots. We still have 16 pilots using FS9 and 49 pilots using FSX. WestWind never said you can not use a cretin simulator and I am not about to start. When a simulator goes a complete year with Zero use then we will archive it and the aircraft for that simulator. While on this subject, FlightGear 2020 flight simulator only has had a couple of flights and really never got beyond the testing stage. FlightGear 2020 latest Version is 3.19 and can be downloaded for free from <https://www.flightgear.org/> I need to point out here that this is the only authorized source of this simulator and it is FREE to download.

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WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

I just found out that the 2024 update is now a release candidate. Flight Gear is free and open source simulator and may be an alternative to MSFS if you can not afford to upgrade your computer or simulator. The reason I keep saying Free for this simulator is because there are illegal copies for sale by the impious Walter White. WestWind will not support those illegal copies and you should not waste your hard earned money when the product is free to begin with.

Chief Maintenance Officer - (CMO) Oversees all aspects of the airlines fleet and scenery initiatives for WestWind Airlines. Several issues have been brought to the Presidents attention. And attempts to address those with the CMO at the time did not produce any results. After 18 months of unanswered requests to add aircraft and new paint jobs I felt I had no other choice but to relieve the CMO. I was able to hire Joe Gay as director of Aircraft and he has since filled some of those requests and I have added several new general aviation aircraft to get the Aircraft department moving forward again. Any one able to paint aircraft for MSFS 2020 or X-Plane in WestWind's current livery should submit the files to me and Joe for review and upload. One aircraft worthy of mention here is the Piaggio P180 Avanti II by FlightFX. While we do have a management only livery for our management team (FSX version), anyone can use the aircraft without the management livery. Bob Strum, the VP of Scenery has been very productive on the X-Plane side of the house adding custom WestWind terminals to our Main, Cargo hubs, and satellite airports as well as our various resorts.

George Forster our IT guru has been busy with behind the scenes updates of the programming code behind our website and forum. The forum is up to date with the latest php 8.2.24. But changes in the PHP core code caused problems with the main website and gave warnings on every page (over 800 pages). So he has gone back to php 7.4.33 and is testing/and updating one page at a time to prepare for the php 8.xx update. Current about 200 pages are ready.

There have been some changes/updates to the current website that managers may have noticed that routes can not be deleted if a flight has been flown using that route. This preserves the integrity of everyone's flight log and awards verification. A obsolete or out of date route may be deactivated and removed from the schedule and future Hub Slam requirements. Same with the Airport database. Airports cannot be deleted if they have been flown to or from. It is worth repeating that if you get a rejection notice on an airport you added, we need you to make the requested corrections and resubmit. We can not make corrections at our level.

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WestWind 2025 State of the Airline Report

2025 and beyond goals, Hub Managers should review routes and insure they are up to date and going to the correct location one example is VHHH used to be Hong Kong Kai Tak International (now VHHX in MSFS 2020), but VHHH is now Hong Kong Chek Lap Kok Airport about 19 miles to the west of Kai Tak. But many routes still going to Kai Tak using the VHHH ICAO code. That is just one of several examples around the world. Actually this is an ongoing process that carries over from year to year.

Cargo Hubs are now Satellite Hubs of the closest Main Hub as well as Mini hubs and Hub Managers will be able to manage the cargo and passengers routes of those as well, The changes are in progress on the website.

Charters will see a bit of an overhaul to make it easier to browse the available charters. For now the search function is the best way to find a charter.

The Chief Pilot (John Condon) and I have been discussing idea's and We will start to lay the foundation for new training program modeled after real world training, with the ultimate goal of restoring WestWind ATO status with VATSIM. I do see the ultimate goal is a LONG Range goal, but that is what we will be working towards. There are some parts that need to wait for website updates be I intend to get some of the first lessons done and posted in 2025. Don't worry if you are happy with the current training/promotion system, it not going away just yet.

Report Submitted By:

Sean McConnell
President/CEO
WestWind Airlines

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NOW HIRING

Exciting career opportunity awaits you!

WestWind Airlines is seeking applications for **Chief Maintenance Officer (CMO)** - a position with a seat on the Executive Committee.

WestWind Airlines is seeking an enthusiastic and detail oriented individual who enjoys working in a team environment with a focus on promoting and growing our aircraft and scenery departments. This position requires that you have the ability to paint aircraft.

Are you ready to accelerate your virtual career into overdrive?

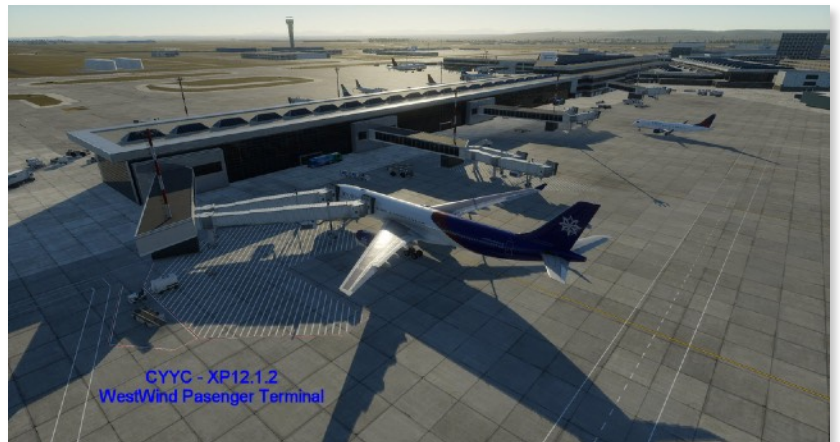
Contact **Sean McConnell** via Private Message on the WestWind Forums to apply.



Calgary Hub Scenery for XP12.1 Upgraded

Bob Sturm, VP of Scenery, recently upgraded the Calgary Hub (CYYC). This version (12.1) incorporates new features and resources that were not in the original 12.0 version. You should not install this if you have not upgraded your version of X-Plane 12. Bob stated that a number of correction/fixes were made to the airport, dual moving jetways were added where appropriate, and some other newer resources/objects were added.

Passenger Terminal



Aerial View



Nice work and thank you, as always, Bob!





NOW HIRING

Exciting career opportunity awaits you!

The Online Operations & Events department is now hiring for **Director of Online Operations & Events**.

WestWind Airlines is seeking an enthusiastic individual who enjoys working in a team environment with a focus on promoting and growing our online and events department.

Are you ready to accelerate your virtual career into overdrive?

Contact **John Condon** via Private Message on the WestWind Forums to apply.

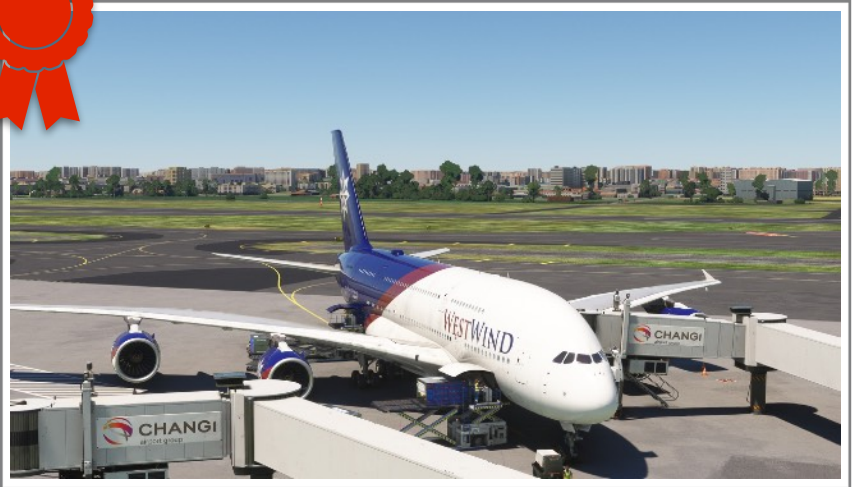


Monthly Screenshot Competition Winners

January Winner - Donald Tinc WWA3635



February Winner - Brian Mills WWA1108



Congratulations!



Phil Cohen (WWA1573)

WestWind Journal - MeetMe Column

Welcome to another edition of the MeetMe column where The WestWind Journal sits down with fellow pilots within the airline to learn more about them.

This month, we had the privilege of sitting down with **Bob Sturm** (WWA230), **Vice President of Scenery** and **Singapore Hub Manager** here at WestWind Airlines.

WWJ: I'd like to thank you for taking the time to sit down with us for an interview, Bob.

WWJ: Let's kick things off - how long have you been with WestWind Airlines?

BS: I joined WestWind in April of 1999, so if my math is correct, it will be 26 years this April.

WWJ: That's a long time - congratulations on your tenure with WestWind. I'm curious to learn - why did you join WestWind Airlines?

BS: Up until joining WestWind, I had just been, so to speak, "boring hole in the sky". One day I happened to come across something about "WestWind Cielo" which caught my attention. So I looked into it and the possibility of flying cargo for a VA looked like it would give some purpose to flying; so I signed on, and the rest is history.

WWJ: What is your favorite thing about flying for WestWind?

BS: The absence of rigid rules. We have the freedom to fly where we want and an extremely large selection of aircraft. I have enjoyed meeting like-minded individuals from all over the world and have even had the opportunity to meet a couple of them I person.

WWJ: Not only have you been with the airline for nearly 26

years, but you've also been in management for a long time. Why did you join management?

BS: I joined management because I wanted to contribute something to this VA. I wanted to be able to be a voice in the decisions which would make this the best VA.

WWJ: What past management roles have you held here at WestWind Airlines?

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BS: I started out in management many years ago as AHM, and then Manager of KORD. One day I received a call from Steve Canham, then CEO, asking me if I would be interested in the position of E.V.P. of Hub Operations. I accepted, and held that position for a few years until I got interested in Airport Scenery Design; at which point I resigned from that position to devote full time to FS9 and FSX scenery work.

More recently I became VP of Scenery Design and then HM at Singapore.

WWJ: For those who may not be aware, can you describe your key responsibilities in your current management role and any top priorities you have in that role?

BS: As manager at Singapore, which was a floundering Hub, I attempt to recruit new pilots and to encourage and set an example for the current pilots of that hub. We are still very small, but the pilots I have are very dedicated. As for VP of Scenery, my key responsibility is to bring a little more realism to WestWind Hub airports and bring older airports up-to-date. Unfortunately, at present, I am the only one doing this work, and my expertise is with X-Plane. My hope is that someone will step up to work with the newer MicroSoft Flight Simulator, or that I can make the time to figure it out for myself. Should someone step up for that, I will work along with them to improve all of the WestWind hubs.

WWJ: How long have you been flying flight simulator?

BS: A long time! I started out with the very first Microsoft Flight Simulator on a computer that I built from scratch (Heathkit monitor and a motherboard kit which consisted of a printed circuit board with hundreds of holes in it and a bag of electronic parts that had to be soldered into the correct holes).



WWJ: What got you interested in flight simulation?

BS: From as far back as I can remember, I have always been fascinated with anything aviation. From 1965 to 1969 I was a Jet Fighter Crew Chief and Maintenance Technician in the U.S. Air Force. When I got out I got my Commercial Pilot License (SEL) and was part way through my Instrument Rating training when circumstances beyond my control required me to give it up. Since I was thoroughly hooked on flying, I had to have an outlet, which of course led me to flight simulation.

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WWJ: Thank you for your military service, Bob.

WWJ: What simulator platform do you fly? And why?

BS: I currently fly X-Plane. For years I flew MSFS, right up through FSX. During all those years, I never had a computer that could keep up with MSFS frame rates. I finally got tired of the stutters and gave X-Plane 10 a try. I fell in love with it right away and swore I would never go back to MSFS products. I love the realistic flight dynamics and the great frame rates. Yes, I did recently purchase MSFS 2020 in hopes of learning scenery work, but I don't like it. For the kind of flying I do, the only scenery important to me is the Airport. Everything else is usually 30,000 ft or more below me.



Bob's custom Singapore (WSSS) Scenery in XP12

WWJ: What's your favorite airplane to fly in flight simulator?

BS: My favorite flights are cargo, so I would have to say it is pretty much a toss-up between the Boeing 747-8F and the MD-11F. Back during the FS9 and FSX days it was definitely the Boeing 727.



WWJ: Do you have a favorite route to fly?

BS: No favorite route. I like to explore the world. For years I flew strictly U.S. and Canada routes, but since I took over as HM for Singapore, I now fly everywhere.

WWJ: What other hobbies do you enjoy?

BS: These days, doing airport scenery work, working a part time job, taking care of a 20 acre homestead and raising chickens, doesn't leave me a lot of extra time for other hobbies. I do enjoy reading and anything outdoors.

WWJ: Wow, you may be one of the busiest guys in the airline - especially with your 20 acre homestead. With all of your responsibilities, I won't take up anymore of your time, but I really appreciate you sitting down with me today and answering some questions - it's been great to learn more about you.



Cockpit Chatter



FlightFX's P180 for Microsoft Flight Simulator

By Sean McConnell

I recently purchased the **FlightFX Piaggio Avanti II P-180** from the MSFS 2020 Marketplace. I had our WestWind Management Livery back when I had FSX, but had not flown it much except when I needed to log some admin time to stay active.

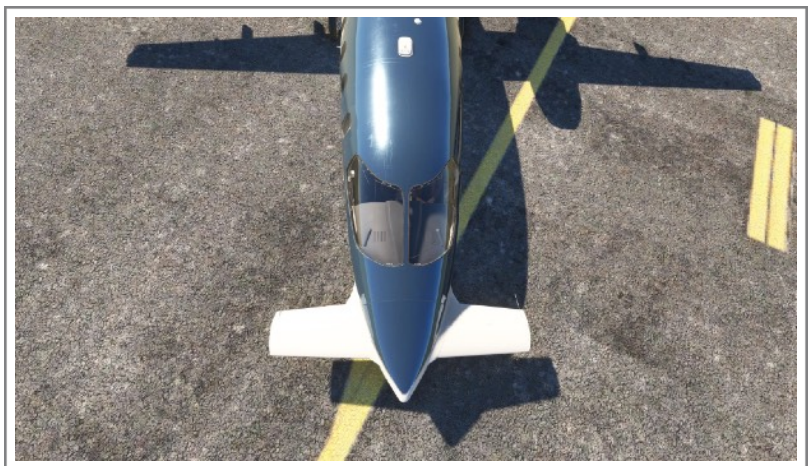


Since purchasing, I have already logged some training time in this aircraft. There is one so-called "bug" that I would like to discuss - the nose wheel slamming down on the runway after landing. I have experienced that myself, and at first agreed it was a bug. But after some research, and after talking to a real P-180 pilot, I am not so sure it's actually a bug.

I'm now thinking that most people who are reporting this as a bug, is making the same mistake I was and flaring just before touchdown and landing with a nose high attitude - like one would in just about any other aircraft.

With the P-180, the proper landing attitude is pretty flat with the nose wheel only slightly higher than the main gear with a one or two degrees nose up attitude, at most. I have seen the proper landing demonstrated on YouTube, so that is the thing I need to work on with this new air frame.

The problem is that the front wing is not actually a canard like most people think; they do not actually move except for the flaps on the front wing. The front wing wants to float in a ground effect causing the nose to drop when it stalls. You need to almost force the nose down when you get into ground effect, not let it float. I will think about making a video after I get the kinks worked out of my own technique and share it with the group.



The FlightFX P180 is available through the MSFS2020 Marketplace for \$24.99US





The FlightSim Community Survey 2024 is Live!

The world's largest flight simulation survey is here! Between March 7th and 17th, Navigraph invites you to share your insights, preferences, and experiences on the latest flight simulation trends. How has Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 impacted the community? Have your flying habits changed? Your input helps track trends and shape the future of flight simulation.

[Take Survey Now!](#)

This year, they've partnered with 74 major developers, organizations, and media outlets to ensure your feedback reaches those shaping the flight sim industry. They've refined the questions based on industry trends and themes from our partners, making this year's edition more insightful than ever.

- The survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.
- It's anonymous; we don't collect personal data.
- Results will be published in mid-April on navigraph.com/blog and shared by our partners.

Spread the Word

You can help them make this the biggest survey by sharing the link with your fellow flight simmers. Over 23,500 enthusiasts participated in last year's survey, and they hope to do even better this year.



WestWind Airlines Online Operations

WestWind Online Operations is devoted to flying online, using a massive network called VATSIM, a free organization with over 176,000 members and many servers. At any time during the day, there can be anywhere from 200-1200 people online, with an average of 500-600.

VATSIM News

Boston Virtual ARTCC Launches "BVA Special Operations"

BVA hosted a launch event for its new BVA Special Operations (BVASO) group. Born out of the original "BVA Military," BVASO sets forth a new mission statement to not only provide realistic military training and operations within the Boston ARTCC (ZBW), but also grow and expand to include a number of real-world ZBW aviation-related services and simulations such as Search & Rescue, Medevac, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR).

BVASO is an authorized VATSIM Special Operations Association (VSOA).

[Click here for full NOTAM](#)



UPCOMING POPULAR VATSIM EVENTS

<p>MMUN - Visit Cancun</p> <p>MMUN - Cancun</p>	<p>Thursdays in Toronto</p> <p>EVERY THURSDAY 1900ET - 2200ET 0000z - 0300z CYYZ CYYZ CYYU GYKF CYHM CYAM CYYO</p>
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<p>Frankfurt Friday</p> <p>Frankfurt Friday - every Friday - 1900z - 2100z</p>	<p>Sunday in Springfield</p> <p>Sunday in Springfield January 26, 2025 2359z-0300z Kansas City ARTCC</p>
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Feature Event of the (next) Month

Sun 'N Fun 2025 - Lakeland, FL

**April 6TH
2025
22:00Z - 01:00Z**

FEATURING KLAL

MIAMI ARTCC
MIAMI, FL AIR ROUTE TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER

[Click event graphic for further details](#)

In the Real World - Aviation News

Almost 9 Hours: Will This Be The Longest Commercial 737 MAX 8 Flight Ever?

Spanish-Portuguese leisure charter carrier Iberojet operates two weekly flights between Madrid (MAD), Spain and Punta Cana (PUJ) in the Dominican Republic.

Usually, these flights are operated with their fleet of Airbus A330-300s, with occasional A330-900 substitutions. The flight from Madrid has an average air time of just over 8 hours and 40 minutes, while the flight leaving Punta Cana returns in 7 hours and 15 minutes thanks to the tailwinds.

However, due to speculated lower demand, Iberojet will swap out their A330 heavies for a Boeing 737 MAX 8 on two days in April 2025. On April 8 and 22, Iberojet will push the limits of the MAX 8, operating the following schedule as first noted on filings website Official Airline Guide (OAG):



- Flight E9801: Departing Madrid (MAD) at 4:00 p.m. and arriving in Punta Cana (PUJ) at 6:55 p.m. local time (8 hours and 55 minutes block time).
- Flight E9802: Departing Punta Cana (PUJ) at 9:25 p.m. and arriving in Madrid (MAD) at 11:45 a.m. the following day (8 hours and 20 minutes block time).

While the flight from Punta Cana to Madrid isn't a problem, the flight to the Caribbean will definitely test the limits of the aircraft. For starters, the great circle distance between Madrid's Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport and Punta Cana International Airport is 4,087 miles (3,552 nautical miles).

The great circle distance is the shortest path between two points on the globe, but in reality, flight plans are not perfectly straight mainly due to factors such as ATC and company routing, and airspace restrictions, as well as weather conditions.

In this case, they will be flying into the wind, which will increase fuel burn. That's quite a run as Boeing says the MAX 8 has a theoretical range of 4,028 miles (3,500 nautical miles).

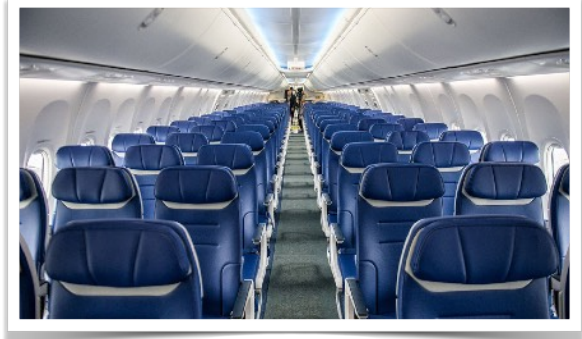
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In the Real World - Aviation News

Almost 9 Hours: Will This Be The Longest Commercial 737 MAX 8 Flight Ever?

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Even though a standard MAX 8 can seat up to 189 passengers in an all-economy configuration, Iberojet is limiting seating capacity to 123 passengers each way, significantly reducing the potential zero fuel weight (total weight of the airplane and all its contents, minus the total weight of the usable fuel on board) and required fuel for those flights.



Unfortunately Iberojet has not responded to my questions about the equipment swap, so I have not been able to find details about who will operate this flight on their behalf, as Iberojet is strictly an Airbus operator.

In the past, some carriers have pushed the MAX 8 to operate flights with block times just over 8 1/2 hours long, even though those numbers have since gone down to 8 hours. It will be really interesting to see the real-world telemetry from these two flights once they are completed.



Don't Be Weird On Frequency

There's a time and place for everything, especially on frequency.

VASAviation recently captured an exchange on New York Center frequency between the enroute air traffic controller and one of the pilots on board a Breeze Airways flight (callsign Moxy 516). Prior to this, the controller was doing her job asking pilots about turbulence at certain cruising altitudes (flight levels to be more specific), and handing aircraft off to surrounding sectors.



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In the Real World - Aviation News

Don't Be Weird On Frequency (Continued)

Controllers generally tend to be serious and monotone when transmitting, but this controller was pretty cherry and friendly. This was very apparent based on how happy the pilots responded to the controller's request.

However, one Breeze pilot took this as an invitation to make the conversation a bit more personal.

After being handed off to Cleveland Center, the Breeze pilot re-contacted New York on their second radio, taking the opportunity to shoot his shot.

Moxy 516 pilot: "New York, Moxy 516."

New York Center Controller: "Yeah?"

Moxy 516 pilot: "Hey there! I pulled you up on my number two radio and I was like... hey, is it inappropriate to ask for a New York Center Controller's number?"

New York Center Controller: "Wait, say it one more time?"

Moxy 516 pilot: "Moxy 516, you wanna send me a text sometime?"

New York Center Controller: "Sir, I'm married."

Moxy 516 pilot: "No, sincere, I'm not interested like that, but figured you had a personality, it's kind of rare."

New York Center Controller: "Oh! Well, thank you, ha ha."

After being turned down, other pilots didn't let the rejection slide, saying, "Cheerio", "Wooooow", "Toodies" and "What just happened tonight??" One pilot even said, "on behalf of all pilots, I'd like to apologize."

Even if he went ahead, he could have saved face by cutting the conversation short once she mentioned she was married. The lighthearted banter quickly went downhill when he tried to justify the question even when she mentioned she was taken.

It sounds like this pilot misinterpreted this controller's pleasant voice as an opening for something more than general friendliness. I'm sure he'll save himself the embarrassment in the future and not try it again. [Click here to listen to the exchange.](#)



Pilot's Tip of the Month

Should You Monitor 121.5?

By Ryan Koch - Pilot WorkShops &
Ed Ward - Senior Command Captain, WestWind Airlines

Pilot Question

"I've heard we're supposed to monitor 121.5 (Guard) while enroute. I don't do it, and I don't know any pilots who do. Should I do this, and if not how should I use my second radio during cruise?" – Mahmoud A.

Ryan's Response

"If you have two radios, put them both to use as long as that doesn't distract you from your primary task of flying the airplane.

There are several frequencies you might monitor in flight. Guard, a.k.a. 121.5, is certainly one of them. Not only does the AIM recommend it, it's actually required by FDC NOTAM. The NOTAM states that, 'all aircraft operating in the United States national airspace, if capable, shall maintain a listening watch on VHF guard 121.5 or UHF 243.0.' The value of 121.5 is that someone is always listening—every ATC facility monitors it. You might be able to relay for another pilot in trouble, and when you need help yourself one day, the frequency will be ready to go.

Another option is monitoring the Center or Approach control covering your current area. The best way to do this is by using flight following. Even on a local practice flight, consider obtaining it for the extra set of eyes it provides. But if you're not using flight following, you can still monitor to hear other traffic on the frequency. In this ADS-B world where ATC can see your N-number even without flight following, a controller might reach out to you.

This happened to a friend of mine in his Bonanza. Center called him directly about a potential traffic conflict, even though he might not have been listening. He documented [the encounter in a video](#).

Finally, a free radio can be used to monitor nearby CTAF frequencies. You might hear traffic departing or arriving, or maneuvering in your practice area. Just don't clutter the frequency with unnecessary calls. Saying you're 'crossing the field southbound at 5500' isn't useful, and it will be heard at every airport on that frequency for hundreds of miles."



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Pilot's Tip of the Month

Follow-up on Monitoring 121.5

By Ed Ward - Senior Command Captain, WestWind Airlines

Real World Airline Guard (121.5) Procedures

VATSIM has recently authorized the use of the radio frequency 121.5 and has changed its Code of Conduct to reflect such. A question that might arise is the impact this will have on Westwind pilots flying airliners on VATSIM.

Let's take a look, in detail, at the correct procedures for using 121.5. The worldwide International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) frequency of 121.5 is primarily an emergency frequency that airliners would use if in distress. It clears the workload of one controller talking to several airliners on his frequency down to one controller talking only to the airliner that has the emergency. Priority handling that ensures a safe outcome is the main reason for using 121.5. This frequency is monitored 24/7 by all countries who are members of the ICAO. If an emergency occurred, RW pilots would squawk 7700 on the transponder, then declare an emergency on 121.5, and comply with any corrective action needed.

Note: The loss of pressurization requires putting on your oxygen mask first, then paying attention to details on the radios.



The question might occur as to what would be considered an emergency occurrence. The RW answer is anything outside the normal operating procedures of the Airline's Standard Operating Procedures Manual. The Captain has the overall authority and may use his discretion in emergency compliance.

The frequency of 121.5 is also used by controllers who want to communicate to an airliner not in an immediate emergency situation. This would occur to remedy a "dropped frequency". For example, a controller gives an Airline Flight number a new frequency to contact, and the request is not complied with. The controller will notify his supervisor, who will try to contact the airliner through the Guard Frequency 121.5. Please consider that many international flights are crewed by pilots who use English as an ESL (English as a second language), and unintentional mistakes are possible.

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Pilot's Tip of the Month

Real World International operations, using Nat Tracks and Oceanic Routes, require special emphasis concerning the Guard Frequency (121.5). RW airliners are flown outside the range of VHF radio transmissions and rely on CPDLC (Controller Data Link Communication) and High Frequency (HF) radio. Pilot attention is provided by a SELCAL radio signal transmitted and activated by the pilots or ground stations.

These communications take time, while transmitting on the Guard Frequency is immediate. Consider the following situation. You are in an airliner twenty miles behind me on a NAT TRACK. You hear this transmission on GUARD.

"PAN, PAN, Westwind 28 Super, Crossing 40 West at Flight Level 390 is experiencing Severe Clear Air Turbulence and Wind Shear."

Hearing this on Guard gives you time to put the seat belt sign on and alert all crew members and passengers for possible severe turbulent conditions.

How should WestWind pilots plan to use the emergency frequency of 121.5? There are several possibilities with this change of the VATSIM Code Of Conduct. First, I would suggest that the frequency of 121.5 be placed in your number two radio. Use your number one radio as primary for normal operations. Hopefully, the guard frequency will be monitored by a VATSIM supervisor who can help you if something unusual occurs.



Some VATSIM controllers allow emergencies if their workload is light. This might be a time to test your skills using the emergency frequency 121.5. Some pilots might be asked to contact 121.5 if their VATSIM abilities are below par. This would be a much softer approach than having the controller disconnect the pilot with a follow-up email concerning an infraction.

Outside of VATSIM are two ATC apps using advanced AI. Beyond ATC and Say Intentions are apps that would allow 121.5 for emergencies. Although both programs are payware, they are on the cutting edge of AI for flight simulation. It will be interesting to follow their development in two main areas. One is emergency conditions, and the other is the ability to disconnect from VATSIM (when no controller is available) and continue your flight using CPDLC.



WESTWIND PROMOTIONS AND AWARDS



Pilot Promotions - January

- Mike Jones WWA3381 - Sr. Command Captain +15
- Edward Harper WWA2683 - Sr. Command Captain +12
- Trevor Golding WWA121 - Sr. Command Captain +9
- Larry Horton WWA3241 - Sr. Command Captain +4
- Chris Trott WWA3382 - Sr. Command Captain +4
- Kevin Pinkosky WWA3681 - Category II

Recognition Awards - January

- Nathaniel Miller WWA1055 - 17 Years of Service
- Nicholas Baker WWA3229 - 12 Years of Service
- Jim Gesell WWA3461 - 10 Years of Service
- Bob Sturm WWA230 - 3,000 Flights Logged



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WESTWIND PROMOTIONS AND AWARDS



Pilot Promotions - February

- Andrew Wheeler WWA49 - Sr. Command Captain +22
- Bob Sturm WWA230 - Sr. Command Captain +20
- Nicholas Baker WWA3229 - Sr. Command Captain +14
- Nathaniel Miller WWA1055 - Sr. Command Captain +13
- Dwayne White WWA2741 - Sr. Command Captain +10
- Brian Mills WWA1108 - Sr. Command Captain +8
- Bryan Sutherland WWA3177 - Sr. Command Captain +7
- Gerald Spiers WWA3311 - Sr. Command Captain +6
- Fred Koch WWA3631 - Sr. Command Captain +1
- Dave Winum WWA258 - Sr. Command Captain +1

Recognition Awards - February

- Doug Phelps WWA3238 - 12 Years of Service
- Larry Horton WWA3241 - 12 Years of Service
- Joe Gay WWA2610 - 15 Years of Service
- Nathaniel Miller WWA1055 - 7,500 Hours
- Bryan Mills WWA1108 - 5,000 Flights Logged



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- CIO - George Forster
- CAO & Chief Pilot - John Condon
- COO - Phil Cohen
- CMO - *Vacant*

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- Hub Ops Manager - *Vacant*

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- Dallas-Ft. Worth - Al Stallbaumer
- Denver - Brian Mills
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