Non-Towered Operations Part 1 Communications

[Narrator]
More than half of General Aviation operations are conducted at non-towered airports, which includes when an airport's control tower is closed, and air traffic services are not provided.

As the pilot-in-command, you must know and understand operations at these airports.

This three-part series focuses on communicating effectively and operating safely in the non-towered environment.

Here, in Part 1, we discussed basic radio communications.

In Part 2,we'll dive deeper into VFR operations.

In Part 3, we'll cover mixed VFR and IFR operations at non-tower airports.

It is vitally important that pilots communicate properly and follow the prescribed operating procedures.

This three-part series will provide best practices and help us all fly safely.

Let's consider an example that includes a series of improper communication behaviors. See how many of these you can identify.

[Skyhawk]
Two-four-one taking the active.

[Warrior]
Bill is that you? Have you talked to John? We are going to the lake this weekend, if you'd like to come.

[Warrior]
Warrior five-seven-bravo on short final.

[Skyhawk]
Yeah, you can count on Heather and me to show up.

[Tower]
Two-four-one turning upwind to crosswind.

[Warrior]
Warrior five-seven-bravo clear of the active.

[Barron]
Baron seven-niner-whiskey, inbound from Quest, any traffic in the pattern please advise.

[Skyhawk]
Four-one on downwind.

[Skyhawk]
Four-one turning base for Runway two-zero.

[Warrior]
Warrior five-seven-bravo line up and wait for Runway two-zero.

[Barron]
Baron seven-niner-whiskey, two-mile final, full stop, Runway two-zero.

[Skyhawk]
Turning final for Runway two-zero.

[Narrator]
Clearly this is not going well. How many errors did you catch? Let's listen again and identify them.

[Skyhawk]
Two-four-one taking the active.

[Narrator]
While talking on the published frequency, the pilot did not clearly state the airport name, aircraft call sign, aircraft location, or intentions. Use proper aviation phraseology.

Begin with the airport name followed by the word "traffic", then aircraft make or model, aircraft call sign, and then state your location and intentions, and end by repeating the airport name.

"Taking the active" is never proper aviation phraseology; you should always use the runway identifiers.

[Warrior]
Bill is that you? Have you talked to John? We're going to the lake this weekend if you'd like to come. Warrior five-seven-bravo on short final.

[Skyhawk]
Yeah, you can count on Heather and me to show up.

[Skyhawk]
Two-four-one turning upwind to crosswind.

[Warrior]
Warrior five-seven-bravo clear of the active.

[Narrator]
Social conversations over the radio are distracting and should be avoided. To keep yourself and others safe, limit your communications to safety-essential information. And, again, "active" should not be used.

[Barron]
Baron seven-niner-whiskey, inbound from Quest any traffic in the pattern please advise.

[Narrator]
The phrase "any traffic in the pattern, please advise" should not be used under any condition. While it is acceptable to give a fixed name, you should always include the distance in nautical miles and the direction from the airport.

For example, 5 northeast.

[Warrior]
Warrior five-seven-bravo line up and wait for Runway two-zero.

[Narrator]
Line Up and Wait, is not acceptable procedure at non-towered airports. Let's listen to the pilots again, this time using proper phraseology.

[Skyhawk]
Westland traffic, Skyhawk seven-two-four-one-kilo, departing Runway two-zero, closed traffic, Westland.

[Warrior]
Westland traffic, Warrior six-zero-five-seven-bravo, final, Runway two-zero, full stop, Westland.

[Skyhawk]
Westland traffic, Skyhawk seven-two-four-one-kilo, left crosswind, closed traffic, Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Warrior]
Westland traffic, Warrior six-zero-five-seven-bravo, clear of Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Barron]
Westland traffic, Baron four-zero-seven-niner-whiskey, five-mile straight-in, full stop, Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Skyhawk]
Westland traffic, Skyhawk seven-two-four-one-kilo, left downwind, touch-and-go, Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Barron]
Westland traffic, Baron four-zero-seven-niner-whiskey, two-mile final, Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Skyhawk]
Westland traffic, Skyhawk seven-two-four-one-kilo, extending downwind for the Baron, Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Warrior]
Westland traffic, Warrior six-zero-five-seven-bravo, holding short, Runway two-zero, Westland.

[Narrator]
Remember, proper communication enhances safety for everyone.

Click on the Resources tab. There you will find several safety resources.