

Merrill Field Airport Driver Training Program

Updated 9/23/2020

Authority

Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC), Chapter 11.60 details the operations, regulations and authority of the Merrill Field Airport Manager to impose fines and civil penalties for persons disobeying orders. This document specifies airport manager policy with respect to driver qualifications, vehicle equipage and mandatory communications necessary to operate within the Merrill Field airport movement area.

Objective and Content

The objective of this Driver Training Program (DTP) is to familiarize drivers with airport operations and enhance the safety of everyone who uses Merrill Field. The DTP presents the information necessary to safely operate a vehicle on the Merrill Field airport movement area. Topics covered include:

- Definition of Terms
- Airport signs and markings
- Radio Communications with the Merrill Airport Traffic Control Tower
- Driving practices on Merrill Field Airport

Definition of Terms

All airports with an operating airport traffic control tower (ATCT) consist of two basic areas—a *movement area* and a *non-movement area*.

Movement area: The movement area is controlled by the ATCT. Tower permission is required to enter the movement area and all airplane, vehicle and pedestrian activities inside the movement area must be approved by the tower. The Merrill Field airport movement area, depicted at attachment one, consists of all runways and taxiways except for portions of taxiway Golf and taxiway Quebec.

Non-movement area: In the non-movement area, airplanes, authorized vehicles and pedestrians are free to move about without talking to tower. All Merrill Field aircraft ramps are located in the non-movement area.

Authorized Driver: An authorized driver has the airfield manager's permission to drive in the movement area. The airfield manager grants permission to drive in the movement area to individuals who have completed this driver training program and have a need. The airfield manager has predetermined that members of the groups listed below have a need to drive in the movement area.

- Leaseholder or leaseholder employee as required to conduct business
- Airport personnel or an authorized airport contractor
- An authorized FAA employee
- Emergency response vehicles (APD and AFD)

Individuals, not listed above, who believe they have a requirement to drive in the movement must contact the airport manager.

Unauthorized Driver: Anyone who drives in the movement area, other than an authorized driver, is deemed an unauthorized driver. Unauthorized drivers are subject to fines. Depending upon the severity of the offense, AMC 11.60 specifies fines ranging from \$50.00 to \$300.00 for each violation. If you are uncertain whether you are an authorized driver, call airport management at (907) 343-6303.

Hold Short: Hold short is an air traffic control term used to instruct an aircraft or vehicle to stop at a hold line pavement marking. An aircraft or vehicle instructed to, “**Hold short,**” is expected to stop such that no part of the aircraft or vehicle extends over any part of the hold line. Drivers must acknowledge hold-short instructions. Hold lines and signs are described below.

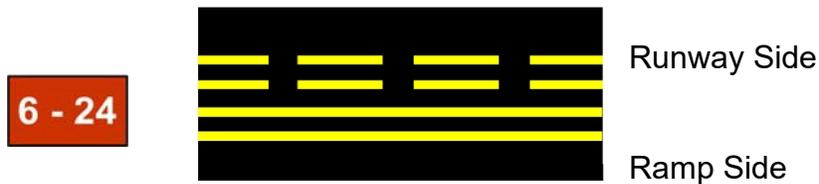
Airport Signs and Markings

Knowing the meaning of airport signs is essential to safely operate in the airport movement area. The following signs and markings are those most commonly encountered at Merrill Field.



Hold Position Signs

The red signs with white lettering depicted above are called hold position signs. Unless tower has cleared you to proceed, you must stop prior to the hold position sign. These signs are located next to the hold position pavement marking described below.



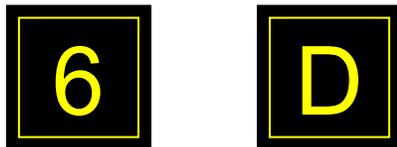
Hold Line Pavement Marking

Hold lines consist of four yellow lines, two solid and two dashed, painted across the taxiway. On Merrill Field, these markings are located approximately 50 feet from the edge of the runway. The double dashed lines are located nearest the runway. When driving, you may not proceed beyond the solid yellow lines (toward the runway) until you have been cleared by tower. You may exit the runway (through the dashed lines) without clearance.



Taxiway Edge Marking

Merrill Field taxiway edges are marked with a dashed and solid yellow line as depicted above. *CAUTION:* Staying on “your side” of the line does not ensure clearance from taxiing aircraft. Their wings may extend over the line. Drivers must yield to taxiing aircraft.



Position Signs

Black signs with yellow lettering are called position signs and they tell you where you are currently located. Runways are numbered and taxiways are lettered. You will find these signs useful if the controller directs you to drive on a specific route.

Communications with Merrill Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT)

Merrill ATCT normally operates two communication positions whose radio call signs are “*Merrill Ground*” and “*Merrill Tower.*” Merrill Ground radio frequency is VHF 121.7 and Merrill Tower frequency is VHF 126.0.

- “Merrill Tower” generally controls aircraft in the air and on the runway preparing for takeoff.

- “Merrill Ground” generally controls vehicles, pedestrians and aircraft taxiing inside the movement area.

To contact the tower, drivers should call “Merrill Ground” on 121.7. Use the following communications procedures to promote safety and efficiency.

- Always listen before you transmit; the controllers may already be talking to an aircraft. Listening helps you build awareness of what’s happening around you.
- Never cut-in or transmit on top of another transmission.
- Think about what you are going to say before keying the microphone button and be brief. The general form of your transmission is to state who you are calling, who you are, where you are, and what you are requesting. ***“Merrill Ground, this is Take Flight Maintenance, at the Take Flight ramp, request permission to proceed from present position to Spernak.”***
- A typical controller response might be, ***“Take Flight Maintenance, hold short, runway six at Delta.”*** The controller will pronounce taxiway letters using standard aviation phonetic pronunciation. Listen carefully; the controller may instruct you to use a route you do not expect. Acknowledge an instruction by repeating it and restating your identification, ***“Hold short, runway six at Delta, Take Flight Maintenance.”***
- Repeating the instruction is called a read back. If your read back contains an error, the controller has an opportunity to correct you before an unsafe situation occurs. Restating your identification with the read back assures the controller that the right person received and acknowledged the instruction.
- CAUTION: Drivers MUST read back controller instructions to ***“Hold short of runway X at X,” “Cross runway X”*** or ***“Enter runway X,”*** where X is a specific runway or taxiway. A simple ***“Roger”*** or ***“Wilco”*** is not an acceptable response. Until you correctly read back the instruction, the controller cannot allow you to proceed.

Drivers should listen carefully to tower instructions and, if you miss part or all of an instruction, just transmit the phrase, ***“Say again.”*** If you don’t understand the instruction, ask; don’t guess! The controller might send you via an unexpected route or give you an unexpected instruction. Proceed only when you are certain of your position and the correct route. Guard against hearing what you expect to hear instead of what was actually transmitted.

General Driving Practices on Merrill Field Airport

Always drive at a prudent and safe speed. The maximum speed on airport ramps is 15 miles per hour (AMC 11.60.210). Drivers must yield right of way to aircraft taxiing, taking off or landing. Compared to vehicles, aircraft move faster, are less maneuverable and generally, have poorer visibility. A vehicle that makes an unexpected move in front of an airplane is at risk. The maximum speed on airport roadways is 25 miles per hour, as posted.

Aircraft may show up when and where you least expect them. Exercise the same caution entering a runway or taxiway that you would to enter a highway. Even if tower has cleared you, never enter a taxiway or runway without looking on the ground and in the air, left and right.

Driving in the Airport Movement Area

Responsibility for Visitors: An authorized driver that admits or otherwise provides someone else access to the Merrill Field parking ramp area is responsible for ensuring the visitor knows and complies with Merrill Field policies and regulations. For example, a person who rents a parking spot on Merrill Field and opens the gate for their friend to drive to the aircraft, assumes responsibility for their friend's actions

Runway Crossing: The only vehicles allowed to cross the runway are: vehicles towing an aircraft, authorized airport and FAA employees, APD and AFD emergency response vehicles. All others are expected to drive around runways.

Driver Requirements to Operate in the Movement Area: Only authorized drivers that have completed this driver training course and meet the equipment requirements listed below may drive in the airport movement area.

- A hand-held or vehicle mounted VHF transceiver
- A rotating or flashing yellow beacon on top of the vehicle
- An airfield diagram with taxiways and runways clearly marked
- A ground vehicle guide to airport signs, markings and light gun signals
- A valid state driver's license (issued by any state)

Drivers are required keep their radio on and tuned to the appropriate frequency the entire time their vehicle is in the movement area.

Movement Area Entry Procedures: The procedure a driver uses to enter the movement area is determined by the tower status, open or closed. The tower operating hours are:

- May 1 – August 31 the tower is open 0600-2400 local
- September 1 – April 30 the tower is open 0600-2200 local

If you are unsure whether the tower is open, attempt contact with "Merrill Ground" on VHF frequency 121.7.

Tower Open Entry Procedures: Drivers must obtain a clearance before entering the movement area. Contact “*Merrill Ground*” on frequency 121.7 to request entry and follow the controller’s instructions.

Tower Closed Entry Procedures: When the tower is closed, authorized drivers may clear themselves into the movement area using the Merrill Field Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF), 126.0. Aircraft also monitor and self-announce on 126.0. The steps to follow are:

- Tune your radio to 126.0
- Listen for traffic
- Carefully scan for aircraft and vehicles
- When clear, announce your intentions

To self-announce, call “*Merrill traffic,*” state your identification, your location, and your intentions. For example, “*Merrill traffic, this is Tow 1, a yellow pick-up with Cessna 172 in tow, located at Spernak, proceeding to UAA ramp via November.*”

If you must tow an aircraft across the runway, self-announce just prior to entering the runway (prior to the hold line) and immediately after exiting the runway. For example: “*Merrill traffic, this is Tow 1, crossing runway 24 at Juliet, southbound;*” and, “*Tow 1 is clear of runway 24 at Julie, south side.*” Remember, you aren’t clear of the runway until all parts of the vehicle or aircraft have passed beyond the hold line.

Radio Failure in the Movement Area

Tower Open: If your radio fails while you are in the movement area, you can alert the controllers by flashing your high/low beam lights towards the tower. When the controllers observe the flashing lights, they will use a light gun to direct your movements. A solid red light means stop where you are and a solid green light means cleared to cross, proceed or go. There are three other light gun signals applicable to vehicles. If you are unsure of a signal’s meaning, refer to the ATCT light gun signal reference you are required to carry in your vehicle.

Tower Closed: If you experience a radio failure when the tower is closed, or if the controllers don’t recognize your radio failure, your primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of aircraft using the airport. It isn’t possible to specify rules for every conceivable situation, however, the general rule is to carefully clear your route and exit the runway and movement area as expeditiously as possible. The most direct route off the runway and out of the movement area is usually the best choice. Remember; always check both directions before entering the runway or taxiways and yield to all aircraft. Once clear, do not reenter the movement area until you obtain a working radio.

“SAFETY IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS. THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN.”