

Severe weather deviation procedure on the North Atlantic

Original image by Capt. Gavin Allderman

Introduction

A study presented at the October meeting of the ICAO North Atlantic Scrutiny Group (SG/5) has revealed that a significant number of lateral deviations on the North Atlantic were due to a misunderstanding of weather deviation procedures by pilots. Clearly this presents a potential for loss of separation events; especially when a large number of aircraft divert from track to avoid build-ups of severe weather.

The procedure for weather deviations is described in Chapter 13 of the NAT Doc007 (formerly the NAT MNPS Manual) and is set out below:

Deviations around severe weather

— If the aircraft is required to deviate laterally from track to avoid weather (e.g. thunderstorms), the pilot should request a revised clearance from ATC and obtain essential traffic information prior to deviating. This is the case even when a pilot expects to have to deviate by a relatively small distance (less than 10 NM).

— If for any reason such prior revised ATC clearance cannot be obtained, and only in such a circumstance, the contingency procedures described below should be adopted. But, nevertheless, in the meantime efforts should be continued to obtain an appropriate revised ATC clearance.

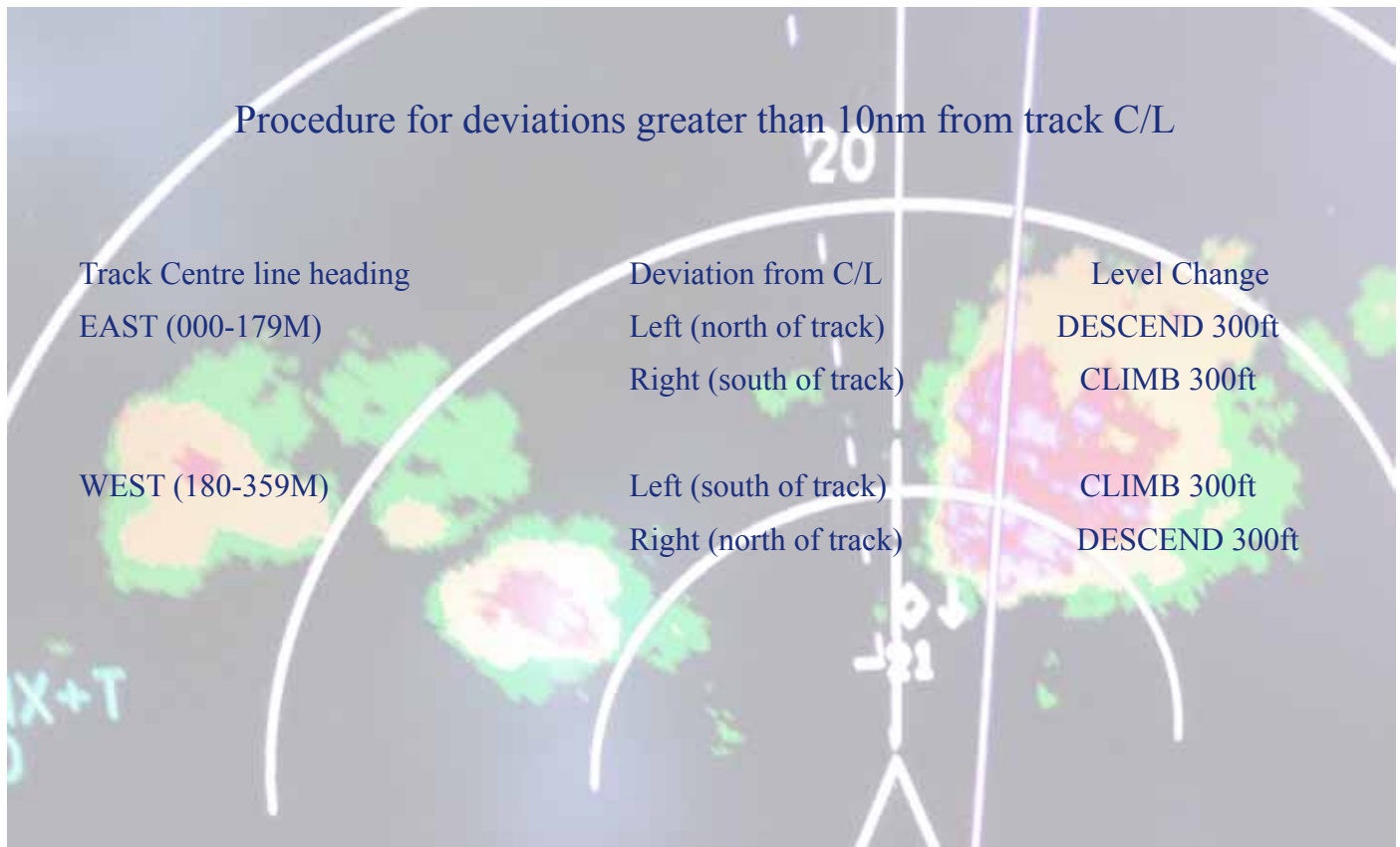
— Pilots must appreciate that ATC can only provide a revised clearance which will continue to assure that minimum standard separations are maintained from all other traffic, including any on adjacent tracks. When this is not possible, ATC will advise the pilot “Unable” and will request the pilot’s intentions. The pilot should indicate the direction, anticipated magnitude and if appropriate the expected altitude change of the intended deviation.

If in receipt of a revised clearance, it should be followed in all its provisions. If such a revised clearance is received after the pilot has commenced the contingency procedures, this revised clearance will then supersede any and all of the provisions within the contingency procedures.

Contingency weather deviation procedure

In the event that a revised ATC clearance has not been obtained, the following contingency deviation procedures should be adopted in their entirety:

- ▶ If possible, deviate away from the organized track or route system;
- ▶ Establish communications with and alert nearby aircraft broadcasting, at suitable intervals: aircraft identification, flight level, aircraft position (including ATS route designator or the track code) and intentions, on the frequency in use (when VHF) and on frequency 121.5 MHz (or, as a back-up, on the VHF inter-pilot air-to-air frequency 123.45 MHz);
- ▶ Watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to ACAS/TCAS (if equipped);
- ▶ Turn on all aircraft exterior lights.
- ▶ For deviations of less than 10 NM, aircraft should remain at the level assigned by ATC;
- ▶ For deviations of greater than 10 NM, when the aircraft is approximately 10 NM from track, initiate a level change of 300 ft.
 - If flying generally Eastbound (i.e. a magnetic track of 000° to 179°) and deviating left (ie north) of track then descend 300 ft; if, however, deviating right (i.e. south) of track then climb 300 ft.
 - If flying generally Westbound (i.e. a magnetic track of 180° to 359°) and deviating left (i.e. south) of track then climb 300 ft; if, however, deviating right (i.e. north) of track then descend 300 ft.



Original image by Capt. Gavin Allderman

Additional Information

For IFALPA Doc 11ATSBL02 – Strategic Lateral Offset Procedure click [here](#)

For ICAO Doc NAT007 click [here](#)