

Confusion on Oceanic Clearance Removal (OCR) Procedures for NAT Traffic

This bulletin applies to all NAT FIRs **EXCEPT** Shanwick. OCR has not been implemented for Shanwick FIR. Past practice remains in place for traffic entering Shanwick from domestic airspace.

REMINDER: RCL WINDOW

Crews must submit the RCL within the prescribed time limit before entering the Oceanic Entry Point (OEP). If you submit your RCL outside this window, it will be automatically rejected.

Important: Be aware of differences in the RCL submission time frames for different FIR/UIRs. Confirm specific requirements during pre-flight planning:

- **Gander:** 90-60 minutes before OEP (strict).
- **Santa Maria:** At least 40 minutes.
- **Bodo:** At least 20 minutes.
- **Reykjavik:** No earlier than 20 minutes (limited coverage above 82N for Inmarsat).
- **Shanwick:** 90-30 minutes.

KNOWN AREAS OF CONFUSION AND RISK MITIGATION

Action to take on “RCL-Received” message:

There remains widespread confusion regarding the “RCL-received” message.

The RCL-Received message with no other action means that the flight may proceed into oceanic airspace at its designed OEP and lateral flight-plan route.

OEP Altitude Requirements:

The lack of clarity surrounding FL requirements at the OEP has been identified as a procedural risk. Crews must ensure they comply with the FL assigned by domestic ATC before OEP and request changes post-OEP, if necessary.

The automated response: RCL RECEIVED BY [ANSP].

The RCL does NOT guarantee the FL requested—domestic ATC assigns the FL prior to the OEP.

This can be confusing compared to past practice, as the altitude assigned becomes the responsibility of ATC. You may cross the OEP at an altitude that is not your requested oceanic and/or flight plan-filed. After OEP crossing, any altitude change may be requested from the Oceanic ATC.

UNDERSTANDING ALTITUDE ASSIGNMENTS

Domestic Air Traffic Controllers are responsible for assigning flight levels (FL) prior to the OEP.

Clarification: The RCL request includes your desired oceanic crossing altitude and maximum acceptable FL.

The RCL received defines lateral routing and speed, and it does not constitute an altitude clearance to cross OEP at the requested altitude. Domestic ATC is responsible for your OEP crossing altitude. Pilots may request changes in altitude after crossing the OEP. This request will be coordinated and assigned by the oceanic controller.

Oceanic clearance is still required in Shanwick Airspace entering westbound.

Crews are reminded of the importance of verifying information with official documents and company bulletins. Incorrect information has been identified on social media and in various forums.

NAT Ops Bulletin: [2023 001 Revision 4](#)

NAT Oceanic Clearance Removal Video: <https://vimeo.com/876042467>

Data Collection for SMS (Safety Management System)

To monitor and mitigate further risks, crews should report any breaches, misunderstandings, or procedural confusions involving RCL, altitude assignments, or OEP requirements. Reports should be submitted through the established SMS process for further analysis and corrective action.