

Known Issues when using PF3 with MSFS

Publish with the releases of PF3 version 3.10 on 13/12/20

We decided to produce a separate document for this subject, rather than include it as part of the main PF3 User Guide. Our thought process was once the following issues have been resolved this document will be, for all intents and purposes, defunct. That could (hopefully) happen at any time and in fact could even be the case before this document is published alongside PF3 version 3.10, but we're not holding our breath!

All of these issues pertain only to using PF3 with MSFS (FS2020) and not FS9, FSX or P3D, which continue to work correctly.

AI Traffic

PF3 is reliant on FSUIPC and at the time of writing the AI Traffic Tables made available by FSUIPC are not fully functional. It's worth pointing out this has nothing to do with the FSUIPC team who continue to do amazing work for the flight sim community.

So what is the problem and how does it affect PF3?

Well, we can still read AI traffic data for your enroute flight and thereby continue to provide traffic advisories. However, one of the other main uses of the AI Traffic Tables was to determine which runway was being used at your departure and destination airports and alas, that data is no longer available. This has been reported to both the FSUIPC team and Asobo via ZenDesk and we understand the FSUIPC team have reported it also.

Until such time as this issue is resolved we can only determine the active runway by using current wind direction. Which brings us nicely onto the next issue.

MSFS Weather

Most of the MSFS weather interface has been deprecated by Asobo/Microsoft and what we do have access to is a little hit and miss to say the least. This has probably caused us more grief than all the other issues put together and of course it's fundamental in determining which runway you should be assigned for takeoff/landing, especially since we can't check AI traffic.

Like the previous issue we have reported this to the FSUIPC team and Asobo via ZenDesk and we understand the FSUIPC team have reported it also.

What makes matters worse is sometimes the weather that is accessible seems correct at times but then within minutes changes to nonsensical values.

So we had a dilemma... should we hold back on releasing PF3 3.10 until such time as these important issues have been resolved or should we try to find a workaround. Well, thanks to an idea from one of our forward thinking team, we decided on the later.

What we have now is two methods for extracting weather data, one is direct from Simconnect, although this is not 100% reliable and it only provides local data and two, we use online weather. But for the later to be of any use requires you to also use 'Live Weather' within FS. So, when you're about to connect to FS you will be asked if you are going to use 'Live Weather' in the sim or not - our recommendation of course is to use 'Live Weather'. Hopefully then, our online weather extracts and the 'Live Weather' in FS *should* match, or near thereabouts.

If our online weather retrieval ever fails, or you choose not to use 'Live Weather', than our fallback would be to use the Simconnect data which unfortunately, as mentioned previously, is not 100% stable and pertains to local data only. This of course would make determining the weather at your destination airport impossible.

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All our testing with the online weather feature has proven to be most successful and we are able to provide meaningful ATIS reports for your destination so we can then calculate which runway you should be assigned and hopefully, if the FS 'Live Weather' is not playing about, it should be the same runway as that being used by any AI Traffic.

There certainly shouldn't be any performance issues with PF3 reading online weather as this is only performed every 10 minutes and the amount of data we download is approximately 200 bytes. The online weather facility we use only update their data every ten minutes anyway so it would be pointless downloading more frequently. The exception to this would be if you request an ATIS report for your destination airport as the online weather report for that would be obtained in addition to the periodic updates.

Locked Aircraft.cfg Files

All the additional aircraft in the Deluxe and Premium Deluxe versions of MSFS are locked and access to the Flight_Model.cfg file (formerly called Aircraft.cfg) is restricted. Since PF3 uses this file to extract the aircraft's fuselage length, full flap speed and the maximum indicated speed, it was yet another step backwards.

Not to be beaten we think we've come up with a very neat and workable solution – if PF3 is unable to read the MSFS Flight_Model.cfg file it will use PF3's dummy Flight Model CFG file in the ...\\Flight\\User folder. If the folder or file doesn't exist it will create them, using the aircraft's name for the folder name. PF3 will then create a dummy Flight_Model.cfg file in this folder with the following entries:-

```
[AIRPLANE_GEOMETRY]
fuselage_length = 0
[REFERENCE SPEEDS]
full_flaps_stall_speed = 0
max_indicated_speed = 0
```

These are the elements PF3 requires to work efficiently as it does with FS9, FSX or P3D. If it can't access them it still works but not as well as it can. The Fuselage Length is used to help determine things like stand/gate parking requirements and/or determine if/when the aircraft has vacated the runway sufficiently. The Full Flaps Stall Speed and Max Indicated Speed are used during final approach.

We've included some of these dummy files with this update and have even added the relevant missing data values, but if you should discover additional folders have been created after using MSFS you can, if you wish, change the any default zero entries to their correct values.

Once these files have been setup you can just forget about them. If and when Asobo allow access to the actual CFG files PF3 will just start using them and not the dummy files. All very efficient and transparent!

Support for 8.33 Khz COMMs

PF3 does not currently support 8.33Khz format radio frequencies. However, we do plan to do so in our next release (3.11). At that point we will be offering the option to use either the new 8.33Khz format or the old 25Khz format. The later will obviously be favoured by those using hardware radios that do not support 8.33Khz.