Tasks Apron / Ground

Difference Apron vs. Ground

Apron and Ground, two terms that seem similar at first glance: Even upon closer inspection, the differences between the two remain subtle.

Ground is responsible only for taxiing traffic in all areas outside the apron (the area with parking positions).

Apron is responsible for all taxiing movements and pushbacks on the apron.

Smaller airports like Bremen, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, or Leipzig do not have a designated Apron working position, so Ground is responsible for all taxiing movements on the aprons and taxiways at these locations.

> If there is an apron position at the airport, it is usually staffed by controllers from the airport operator, whereas Ground is controlled by controllers from DFS.

Tasks

The main tasks of an apron/ground controller on Vatsim include:

Pushback clearances for departing traffic

Depending on the parking position, aircraft may need a pushback before they can taxi to the runway. Details can be found in this article.

Taxi clearances for aircraft from the parking position to the runway or to the designated handover point according to SOPs, and vice versa:

The core task of a ground controller is undoubtedly issuing taxi clearances. Departing aircraft need to be sent to the runway, and arriving aircraft need to be directed from the runway to the parking position. Aircraft should not stop unnecessarily but should keep moving whenever possible. This saves time, fuel, and thus also benefits the environment. The general controller principle is: "Safe, orderly, and expeditious," meaning a safe, orderly, and swift flow of traffic.

Depending on the SOPs or airport charts, there are spatially clearly separated areas of responsibility between Tower, Ground, and Apron.

Efficient pre-planning of ground traffic:

A key characteristic of a good controller is their ability to pre-plan traffic. Without pre-planning, aircraft may have to wait unnecessarily long because a taxiway is blocked, or there may be taxi conflicts. More information on efficient pre-planning of pushbacks and taxi clearances can be found in this article.

Timely recognition and solving of taxi conflicts:

Aircraft come closer to each other at the airport than anywhere else. Therefore, it is all the more important to identify potential conflicts between moving traffic (pushbacks and taxiing aircraft) early on. This goes hand in hand with timely pre-planning. Under no circumstances should two aircraft end up blocking each other's way because neither knows who is number one and who is number two. An "opposite," where two aircraft face each other with no way to avoid, is also unacceptable. Methods for resolving potential conflicts are described in this article.