

# Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

## Field Carrier Landing Practice



### The Need

To adequately prepare for worldwide deployments in support of national security objectives, the Navy's Electronic Attack Wing (CVWP) squadrons based at NAS Whidbey Island must prepare its pilots for what is widely considered the most hazardous routine activity in all of military aviation - landing on an aircraft carrier. This training involves an essential activity known as Fleet Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP).

FCLPs are the required flight training that immediately precedes (and qualifies) pilots for carrier-landing operations. Training flights maintain required readiness levels and are driven by aircraft carrier deployment schedules and the needs of individual pilots.

In order to properly prepare crews for the dynamic nature of shipboard flying, it is imperative to replicate carrier landing experience as much as possible. This includes flying at appropriate altitudes and speeds as well as having practice fields at or near sea level. CVWP aircraft practice FCLPs at both Ault Field and OLF Coupeville. To ensure crews are proficient at that skill, EA6B and EA-18G pilots must perform FCLPs to meet training requirements. These requirements are dictated in the Landing Signal Officer Manual within the Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization (NATOPS) program.

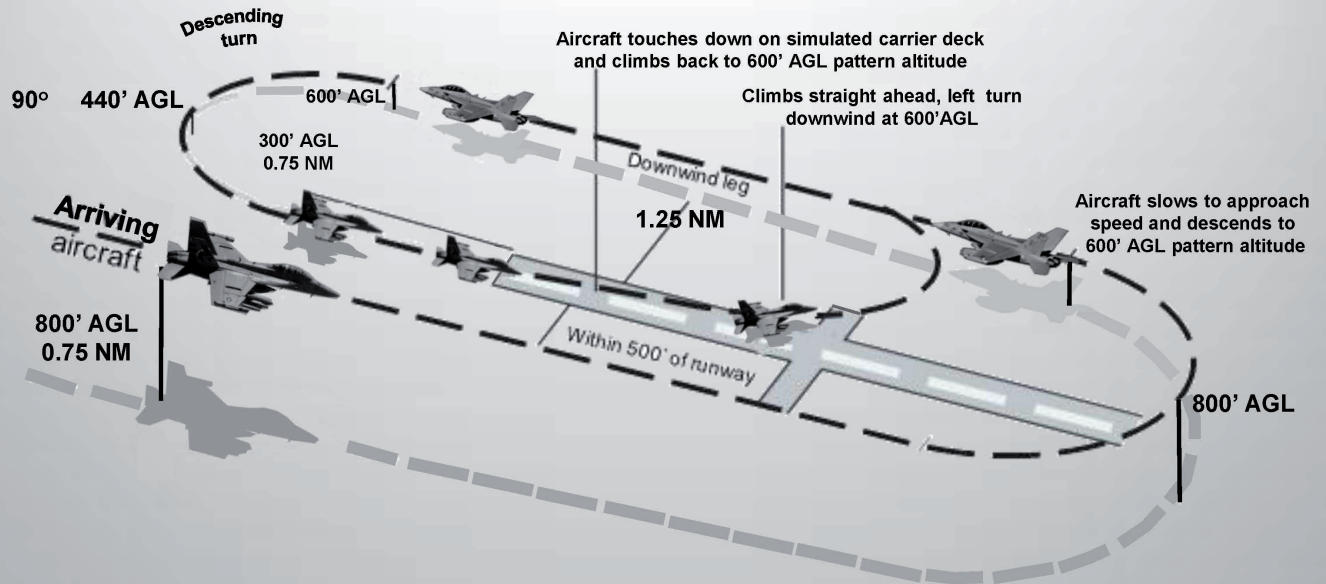
### FCLP Parameters

Due to the density of aircraft operations at NAS Whidbey Island, Ault Field and OLF Coupeville are often used simultaneously to safely and effectively handle the volume of air traffic at the air station; both are integral parts of the air station.



# EA-18G/EA-6B Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP)

## Pattern



**The FCLP pattern is a left-hand, racetrack pattern that extends approximately 1.25 to 1.5 nautical miles laterally from the runway.**

At NAS Whidbey Island, FCLP training involves up to five aircraft flying in patterns to practice touch-and-go landings. Maintaining a proper interval from each other, pilots stay in their pattern and take turns approaching the runway where they touch down then immediately take off again. The participating aircraft then circles around and prepares for another landing. Each aircraft makes multiple touch-and-go landings during these training events.

### Meeting the Challenge

Since landing an aircraft on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier – especially at night - is the most challenging and demanding task in aviation, it is imperative that pilots are able to practice this perishable skill ashore in the most realistic conditions possible before actually doing so aboard an aircraft carrier.



A pilot's qualification to land on an aircraft carrier must be kept current. That qualification becomes outdated if a pilot is unable to conduct a carrier-base landing for more than two weeks; night-time qualifications become outdated after more than one week.

Pilots can conduct daytime FCLPs 30 minutes prior to sunrise up to 30 minutes after sunset. Pilots can conduct nighttime FCLPs from 30 minutes after sunset up to 30 minutes prior to sunrise.

In order to conduct Navy FCLP operations, an airfield requires parallel runways or an Outlying Landing Field located within 50 nautical miles.