SunWest Virtual Airlines

Pilot Handbook

V1.2

Effective January 29th, 2021

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide our members with a centralized source of information regarding the operations of SunWest. This document aims to outline the features of SunWest's website, as well as our expectations for pilots, and what you can expect from us. This document is updated regularly as policies are added and removed. It is the pilot's responsibility to make sure they are familiar with the latest policies listed in this handbook, though the staff will do their best to make changes publicly known as they occur.
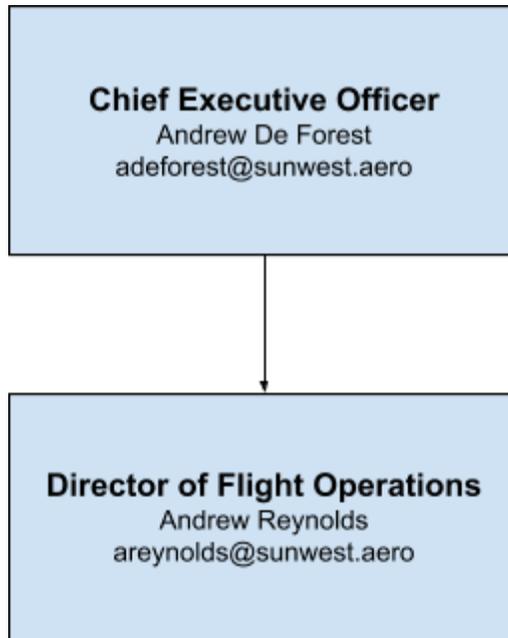
1.1 Who We Are

SunWest is a virtual airline focused on emulating the operations of a fictional, US-based scheduled commercial airline. Our staff & members place a great deal of emphasis on realistic and high-fidelity operations, and we strive to keep things as accurate as possible.

As a virtual airline, SunWest was founded in 2020. However, we have engineered a history and backstory for the airline that dates back to 1985. This has helped us give depth and meaning to our virtual airline, as well as a more diverse operational portfolio.

1.2 Who We Aren't

The flight simulator community is lucky to have a wide variety of virtual airlines that appeal to nearly all types of flight simmers. That said, SunWest is not for everyone. We don't have a wide-variety of aircraft in our fleet. We don't fly to a ton of destinations across every continent. Instead, we fly aircraft that make economic sense to destinations that make operational sense. The value of SunWest comes from our dedication to realism, and if you're the type of pilot who appreciates performance tables, dispatch sheets, navigation charts, and an overall attention-to-detail, SunWest is for you!

1.3 Executive Staff

Chief Executive Officer
Andrew De Forest
adeforest@sunwest.aero

Director of Flight Operations
Andrew Reynolds
areynolds@sunwest.aero

2. Membership

Any person wanting to join SunWest must meet the following criteria:

- At least 18 years old
- Own a legal copy of one of the flight simulators supported by SunWest. Currently, those are:
  - Prepar3D v4 & v5
- Own a legal copy of one of the add-ons supported by SunWest. Currently, those are:
  - PMDG NGXu Base Package
    - PMDG NGXu 600/700 Expansion Package (optional, but highly recommended)

Applications for membership must be completed using the application form found on the website, and filled out as accurately as possible.

2.1 Transfer of Hours

SunWest does not accept hours to be transferred in from any other airline or organization. Much like a real airline, you start at zero. However, if you are applying for a direct-entry captain position, previous experience is required and must be verified by management for consideration.

2.2 Rehiring

Any pilot wishing to return to SunWest after voluntarily leaving is welcome to do so, though your seniority will reset. Pilots returning to SunWest after being removed due to inactivity are also welcome to re-apply, but these will be handled on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of management.

2.3 Leave of Absences

A leave of absence (LOA) is available to pilots who are unable to meet SunWest's minimum monthly flight requirements. An LOA allows pilots to remain an active member of SunWest in good standing without the penalties associated with inactivity.

To be eligible for an LOA, pilots must be members for at least 30 days. Pilots must have also completed at least one flight within 30 days of their request for an LOA.

There is no limit on the amount of time a pilot can be on an LOA, however, it should be considered a temporary measure. If you are planning on being inactive for over 6 months, you will need to voluntarily resign and apply for rehire. LOAs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by management.

2.4 Hub Assignments

When applying, pilots are given the opportunity to submit their hub preferences. In most cases, a pilot is assigned to their preferred hub, however, staffing and operational needs at other hubs may mean a pilot is re-assigned. Pilots are eligible to transfer hubs 90 days after hire, so long as the hub they wish to transfer to has availability.

Pilots must wait 90 days before transferring hubs. There is no limit to the amount of hub transfers a pilot can initiate.

2.5 Aircraft Type Transfer

SunWest pilots are limited to flying the aircraft type they are hired and trained on. However, at various times, there are opportunities to switch to a different aircraft type as operational necessity dictates. If you initiate a transfer to a different aircraft type, you will be seat locked and ineligible to transfer types again for 6 months.

All pilots who switch aircraft types are required to undergo type-specific training.

2.6 Termination

If at any time a pilot violates any conduct policy set forth in this manual, any official company communication channels such as the forums or Discord, or any online networks such as VATSIM while representing SunWest, their membership will be put up for review by management, which could result in their termination, without the possibility of rehire.

2.7 Member Conduct

Pilots are expected to maintain a respectful and civil attitude while representing SunWest in any manner, including, but not limited to: communicating on forums, communicating on Discord, or flying on any online network. Failure to follow this policy will result in punitive action ranging anywhere from a warning to termination, depending on the severity of the incident. Incidents will be investigated and evaluated by management while taking any previous violations into account. A detailed description of what SunWest considers to be acceptable conduct may be found in our **Code of Conduct** document.

3. Flight Operations

3.1 Probation

All new hire pilots begin their career with SunWest on probationary status. To have the probationary status removed, pilots must meet the following requirements:

- Be hired for 180 days
- Complete IOE (initial operating experience) training
- Complete aircraft-specific ground school training

Pilots must complete IOE and aircraft-specific training courses before starting line flying.

3.2 Seniority

A pilot's seniority is based on their date of hire. For example, if a pilot is hired on July 1, 2018, their seniority date is 07/01/2018. They are then more senior to any pilot hired after that date. Seniority is taken into account when bidding on a line, transferring hubs, or applying for an upgrade.

3.3 Rank Structure

SunWest has two ranks: First Officer and Captain. In almost all cases, pilots are hired as first officers. In certain cases, however, operational needs dictate we hire direct-entry captains. Direct-entry captains will be required to complete all new hire training, as well as captain upgrade training.

3.4 Upgrading

A first officer eligible to upgrade may do so by requesting Captain Upgrade Training. The upgrade training focuses on pilot-in-command (PIC) responsibility, decision making, and flying from the left seat. Pilots who fail to successfully complete the training will remain a first officer, and must wait 30 days before trying again.

3.5 Line Flying

Once a pilot completes all required training, they are eligible to begin line flying duties. All flights operated for SunWest must be flown in accordance with the policies set out in the approved **Flight Crew Operations Manual**.

Pilots are required to use accurate fuel loads for flights. Fuel loads are tracked and have an impact on the financial health of the airline, so it's important to set proper values. We have integrated SimBrief Dispatch and modified it to our specifications, so it's highly encouraged that pilots take advantage of it. Using improper fuel loads without a valid reason can lead to the denial of your PIREP.

All flights must be flown with the simulator time appropriately set. If a flight is scheduled to depart at 1900Z, and you anticipate a 30 minute preflight, you should load up your simulator with the time set to 1830Z. This rule does not apply if there is any sort of delay, such as weather or maintenance, but please make a note of it in the remarks section.

Flights must be logged using SunWest's ACARS program, **SunLink**. Instructions on how to use SunLink are detailed within the **SunLink User Manual**, found in the Documents portal of the website. If there is a technical issue with SunLink, and you cannot log your flight with it, you may fill out a manual PIREP.

SunWest does not allow time compression during flights, so please make sure you have an adequate amount of time to complete your selected flights. We do allow mid-flight pausing of the simulator, but please use good judgement when doing so.

3.6 Bidding

Like real-world airlines, SunWest features a seniority-based bidding system. The bidding period begins on the 12th day of the month, and lasts 7 days, until the 19th day of the month. Bids are then processed and assigned.

During the bidding process, the number of lines you can bid on correlates to your seniority number within your assigned hub. For example, if you are the 5th most senior pilot at your hub, you will be able to make 5 bids. When bidding, you will prioritize your bids so that your most desired line is your #1 choice. When bids are processed, the system will attempt to award you your highest-prioritized bid. If a more senior pilot is awarded that line, the system will then attempt to award you your next most desired line, until you are the most senior pilot bidding on that line and it is awarded to you.

You are not required to place your maximum amount of bids. For example, if you are the 30th most senior pilot at your hub, you do not have to place 30 bids. You can place any amount of bids you'd like, but placing the maximum amount guarantees you are awarded a line that you selected.

If you do not win any of your bids, or do not bid at all, a remaining bid line will be automatically assigned to you.

You are not required to fly any bid lines assigned to you.

3.7 PilotPoints

PilotPoints are accrued in a variety of different ways:
- Completing a flight using SunLink: **1 point**
- Completing a flight on VATSIM: **1 point**
- Participating in an airline-sanctioned online event: **1 point**
- Completing a bid line: **3 points**

Actions that award PilotPoints can overlap. For example, if a pilot were to complete a flight using SunLink while on the VATSIM network, he/she would be awarded 2 points.

PilotPoints are one of the factors taken into consideration when applying for a captain upgrade. Pilots must accumulate at least **100** PilotPoints before they are eligible for an upgrade.

4. Communication

4.1 Email

In order to sign-up for SunWest and use our associated services, pilots must have an active and valid email address. For the most part, to reduce clutter, email communication will only be used for the purposes registration and PIREP confirmation. Occasionally, SunWest staff members may need to disseminate information quickly, and will utilize email. For the most part, however, official company announcements can be found on the forums.

4.2 Forum

SunWest maintains a forum that is available to all pilots. Aside from official company announcements, pilots may use this forum to socialize with each other and discuss a wide range of topics. The Code of Conduct and rules available on our forum supersede the requirements of this document.

4.3 Discord

SunWest has a Discord server available to all pilots. An invite link can be found in the navigation area of the crew portal. Discord is a great way to interact and communicate with SunWest members in real-time.

SunWest reserves the right to suspend or ban any user from Discord services for illegal activities, unethical behavior, violation of airline policies, violation of our conduct policies, or violation of the Pilot Handbook.

4.4 Online ATC Networks

Participation in online ATC networks such as VATSIM (https://www.vatsim.net/) and PilotEdge (https://www.pilotedge.net/) is highly encouraged. While representing SunWest, you must adhere to the policies set out by the respective network you're connected to, as well as SunWest's conduct policies.

5. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *Why does this aircraft have no winglets? Why does this aircraft have a Honeywell MCP? How come I can only do a single de-rate with this aircraft?*

A: Much like a real-world operator, SunWest's fleet was acquired from a variety of sources, including direct from the factory, and more often, second-hand from a previous airline. Hours of research went into each fin number to match it's real-world counterpart's configuration. You'll find that older aircraft might have their paint job scuffed, or a little extra dirt on them.

Q: *Do you plan on adding support for X-Plane or Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020?*

A: Not at this time, though we are constantly re-evaluating as the addon ecosystem changes. Currently, the technical cost of adding support for a new simulator outweighs the quality of available addons for other platforms.