

# CHAPTER 10

## Providing a Local Airspace Program

### I. Introduction

The wide variety of airspace arrays and local interagency relationships across the nation pose unique coordination challenges; no one method or timeline fits all situations. While selected airspace arrays or flight operations may be conducive to coordination through a committee process, others may be more appropriately handled with one-on-one coordination.

Effective interagency coordination at the local level consistently focuses the affected agency's airspace user and management's technical expertise on the cooperative resolution of aviation and environmental issues. Regardless of the level of formality established to achieve interagency coordination a consistent, organized approach creates the greatest potential for all parties to develop mutual respect and understanding of agency mandates, which in turn fosters team building and balanced resolution of issues.

Aviation and airspace managers are the key communication links between all airspace users and agency managers. As part of that link, airspace managers facilitate interagency communication so all parties involved may better understand and cooperatively resolve issues of mutual concern. Effective interagency coordination starts with thorough and timely internal dialogue between airspace users and managers. With user priorities clearly understood by aviation and airspace managers, interagency coordination processes can be initiated. Military representatives (MILREPS), military airspace managers, resource agency aviation managers, and unit managers typically form the core of interagency teams. A wide variety of tools are available to facilitate dialogue and issue resolution.

Interagency tools that have proven effective in assisting the coordination efforts include:

- Informal agreements
- Airspace Agreements
- TFRs
- Advisory NOTAMS
- Temporary Towers
- Educational tools
- Site visits
- Videos/Publications
- Checklists
- Crash/Search Rescue Guide
- Critical Airspace Contacts phone list
- Standardized/customized forms
- Training, exercises, classes
- Brochures

## **II. Airspace Analysis**

There are several methods that can be used to analyze airspace use, identify potential future conflicts, and/or determine the make up of interagency coordination teams.

### **A. Land Ownership/Use Patterns**

Land ownership provides an indication of the number of potential partners who may be involved in the development of Airspace Agreements that should alleviate past and future potential airspace conflicts. Activities associated with specific resources should be coordinated with resource specialists as well as administrative contracting (e.g. service or job contracts). Each source is a valuable asset in developing a complete evaluation.

An example of this evaluation process would be a review of a land ownership map to determine agency ownership and significant management uses such as seismic exploration, wild horse collection or aerial seeding. Airspace “ownership” and users could then be overlaid (e.g. using GIS systems) to determine impacts and potential conflicts. Additional aviation information as identified above could then be added to present a fairly complete picture of the specific geographic area in which airspace conflict might occur.

### **B. Trend Analysis**

Unit Aviation Managers, in concert with their respective Aviation Safety Officer, should review historical aviation uses and determine future potential. This evaluation will identify conflict areas that may exist between land management needs and current airspace parameters.

Sources for this analysis may include historical files of flight scheduling forms and project air safety plans, contract files, use/cost data, resource survey project files, and SAFECOMs. This analysis should include military as well as civilian sources.

Agencies with contiguous borders should coordinate with each other. The intent is to capture a complete historical overlay of aviation use. This information, coupled with mapping information, will provide a base for primary determinations of airspace conflict.

## **C. Risk Management**

Historical review of aviation problems (incident/hazard and accident reports) provides a trend analysis of patterns that may be contributing to operational problems. Trends identified through SAFECOM reporting systems provide the basis for risk management decisions concerning specific and long-term agency aviation projects. Risk reduction, which may involve implementation of Airspace Agreements, can be accomplished by following the processes and procedures contained in this Guide and by coordinating training programs, etc.

## **III. Natural and Cultural Resource Issues**

Within agency programs, there may be additional impacts to natural or cultural resources. Agency representatives involved in airspace coordination should be aware of potential noise and vibration induced impacts associated with overflights of these resources. Follow agency guidelines as appropriate. These resources may include:

- Migratory bird routes
- Historical artifacts
- Tribal ceremonies (e.g. vision quests)
- Wildlife breeding, resting and wintering areas
- Recreational (e.g. wilderness)

## **IV. Airspace Activities**

There are many recurring or non-disaster operations that can and will affect the airspace, but do not need a TFR nor meet the criteria for a TFR. Not all of these operations will use aircraft, but their operations could impact aircraft or aircraft could impact the project.

The project location, duration, timing, size or area, altitudes, hazards and many other factors must be considered. These factors and others will influence who needs to be contacted, when to make contacts and how to contact the required entities.

Selected ground operations also affect airspace. Logging operations that use the high lead method could place cables in a location that could be within an MTR or other area that has or may have aerial use, such as hang gliders, sailplanes, a student practice area or approach and departure paths to an airport.

Another example of a ground activity affecting aerial activity is blasting. Further information regarding blasting activity is in Chapter 4, Airspace Hazards. Advance notice of at least 24 hours prior to planned blasting activity should be forwarded to the appropriate MTR or SUA scheduler.

Aerial activities such as a large spray project, aerial seeding, photography, monitoring resources, prescribed fire, VIP flights, research flights, wildlife and horse/burro flights, require thorough and timely coordination with affected agencies. Early coordination minimizes conflicts with military activities which may be scheduled months in advance.

There are three kinds of airspace activities to prepare for:

- Scheduled airspace activity – an airspace activity that is being planned for a specific time and date(s)
- Recurring airspace activity – a day-to-day, on going activity
- Time critical airspace activity – an emergency event such as wildland fire, Search and Rescue (SAR), etc.

#### **A. Scheduled Airspace Activities**

There are scheduled airspace activities that are planned in advance. Contact should be made with the appropriate military units to initiate coordination between agency contacts and the military airspace managers. If conditions warrant, an Airspace Agreement would facilitate cooperation and coordination between the agency and military unit. Contacting the local Flight Service Station (FSS) or other local FAA facilities for information and assistance is also helpful.

Examples of events that may require preplanned airspace coordination are as follows:

- |                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ■ Aerial spray projects   | ■ Aerial seeding                     |
| ■ Aerial photo projects   | ■ Hang gliding competitions          |
| ■ Movie flights           | ■ Research flights                   |
| ■ Balloon gatherings      | ■ Wildlife flights                   |
| ■ Recon Flights           | ■ Telemetry flights                  |
| ■ Prescribed fire flights | ■ Mitigation monitoring flights      |
| ■ Dignitary/VIP flights   | ■ Blasting                           |
| ■ Helicopter logging      | ■ Horse and burro management flights |
| ■ Military exercises      |                                      |

## **B. Recurring Airspace Activities**

These are events that are on going, day-to-day activities. Risk mitigation factors could include sharing maps of planned flights with DoD Scheduling Activities or Scheduling Agencies. Many agency events happen that are recurring. Such as a time limited project (e.g. 14 flights in the same area in a two week period) or a planned daily event such as aerial detection. The following do not necessarily require the deconfliction of airspace, nor do they normally require the closure of involved airspace. FAA and DoD reports have stated that if two aircraft are aware of each other's presence, the risk of a Mid-air Collision can be reduced. In many cases, DoD will voluntarily deconflict the involved airspace (e.g. via scheduling changes), but are not required to do so unless there is a TFR established.

The following are examples of recurring events:

- Detection flights
- Hang gliding
- Migratory Bird Routes
- High lead cable/tower logging
- Air tour operations

## **C. Time Critical (Emergency) Airspace Activities**

These are events that require immediate response and coordination. In these situations, prioritization and timing are essential. A proven tactic for emergency response is pre-planning; it ensures that a unit or individual is prepared to deal with the given situation. Previous sections in this Guide have dealt with long range planning for scheduled events. An unscheduled event requires a different approach. Preparedness for events such as Temporary Flight Restrictions, Temporary Towers, Near Mid-air and intrusions enable units to respond in a standardized, coordinated way that is designed to ensure success. Units are encouraged to periodically test their emergency responses to confirm that they know "who to call" and "when to call" when reacting to time critical situations.

The following are examples of time critical events:

- NOTAM TFR coordination
- Wildfire aviation activities
- Search and rescue
- Near Mid-air Collisions
- Law enforcement activities
- Unsafe aircraft activities
- Intrusions
- Border incursions

The following are some factors that should be considered when coordinating an airspace activity or event requiring a time critical response. Consulting the following list of factors is critical. The list is not all-inclusive but can be used as a guide. It will aid in determining who needs to be contacted, as well as when and how the contact is to be made.

- Who is the approving authority and what has been approved?
- What is the location and geographic boundaries of the project?
- What is the projected timeframe or when did event happen?
- How complex is the project?
- Is media interest expected?
- What are the notification procedures? Chain of command?
- Are processes and/or mitigation measures already in place?
- Is a temporary tower, TFR and/or Advisory NOTAM needed?
- Was there an intrusion? (Ref. Chapter 8, Airspace Conflicts)
- Are airports, SUAs or MTRs affected?
- What are the known airspace hazards?
- Are communications and frequency plans in place?
- What other aircraft have been dispatched and are enroute?

When an unplanned event occurs, the appropriate response may be time critical. In some cases, it will trigger initiation of a pre-arranged operating procedure that applies to that event (e.g. wildfires, search and rescue, some law enforcement and media activities). Checklists, written plans and guides are developed and used to determine appropriate responses, and are customized to local units as needed.

In other cases an event may occur that compromises safety, but little immediate action beyond suspending aviation operations may be possible. The user of this Guide may be more involved with documenting and reporting the incident, and may be requested to provide additional information as an investigation or other external action is taken.

Local coordination agreements with military units may provide an informal process for reporting and investigating incidents involving military aircraft. These procedures may be used to supplement a formal FAA reporting process. However, it is the agency's responsibility to determine what level of report is appropriate, and to forward this information in a timely manner.

## **V. Airspace Actions or Proposals**

There are many factors to consider when dealing with airspace actions or proposals that may impact an agency or its operations. Actions and proposals may include:

- Special use permits
- Air tour proposals
- Environmental proposals
- Reviewing/creating Air Tanker Bases or Helibases
- Campground/wilderness proposals
- Reviewing/creating retardant abort sites

The following factors should be considered when evaluating an airspace proposal, for both long term and recurring events. The list is not all-inclusive, but can be used as a guide, and will influence who needs to be contacted as well as when and how the contact is to be made.

- Status of airspace (MTR, SUA, etc.)
  - The effect the proposal has on other airspace
  - Any hazards present (cables, etc.)
  - Hazards/conflicts to airspace as a result of this proposal
  - Airports and their limitations
  - Weather considerations
  - Type and number of aircraft involved, speed and altitude of operation
  - Type of load (internal or external)
- 
- Location and geographic boundaries of the project
  - Timeframes associated with the project
  - NEPA considerations (Ref. Chapter 9)
  - Land ownership of the land the project will be associated with, adjacent ownerships
  - Land use allocations and zoning categories
  - Existing agreements or the need for additional agreements
  - Level of public participation anticipated, summary of public input
  - FAA Circularization process
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- Status of other scheduled events
  - Approval authorities, including State agencies
  - Communications plan (internal and external)
  - Coordination needs (internal and external)
  - Agency processes and requirements
  - Mitigation measures needed or in place
  - Any political issues- internal or external

## **VI. DoD Training Exercises & Local Airspace Coordination**

This section focuses on coordinating military readiness training exercises within special use airspace over agency lands.

Military readiness training exercises are the key link between routine day-to-day readiness and demanding theater/worldwide contingency operations. Readiness training exercises simulate contingency operations and enable the military to develop and validate operational concepts. Exercises also ensure that military units are properly trained and capable of fulfilling their mission(s).

Since readiness exercises are more intense and complex than routine training, more in-depth planning and coordination within the military, as well as with potentially affected resource management agencies, is required. This level of coordination enhances flight safety and reduces potential environmental impacts to resources within the designated exercise area.

The relationship between the military and natural resource management agencies is important for this type of coordination effort, as each possesses environmental stewardship roles and responsibilities unique to their agency. Military airspace managers are the key link between military exercise planners and the natural resource agency managers and aviation coordinators. Military airspace managers facilitate interagency communication so all parties involved may better understand and jointly resolve issues raised as a result of readiness exercises.

### **A. Pre-Exercise Planning**

Pre-Exercise Planning allows each resource agency potentially affected by the exercise to first view it from a broad organizational perspective. Timely, properly targeted interagency coordination of an exercise often precludes the late identification of issue(s) by resource agency leadership or key field level personnel. Late inputs can unnecessarily harm interagency relationships and disrupt completed technical level planning or military exercise planning conference processes.

Coordination between military airspace managers, exercise planners and resource agencies should include the following:

1. DoD Exercise Points of Contact/Resource Agency Contacts
  - a. Names
  - b. Telephone and fax numbers
  - c. Addresses
  - d. E-Mail addresses



2.    Airspace
  - a.    Dates and times
  - b.    Special Use Airspace
  - c.    Military Training Routes
  
3.    Aircraft
  - a.    Types
  - b.    Estimated numbers
  
4.    Activities
  - a.    Estimates of proportion of flight activities that will be:
    - Low altitude
    - Supersonic
  - b.    Chaff and flares
  
5.    Potential resource agency environmental or aeronautical concerns
  
6.    Concept plan and technical level coordination with resource agencies