

Aerodrome User Groups

Revision 0

20 July 2012

General

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Advisory Circulars (ACs) contain information about standards, practices, and procedures that the Director has found to be an **acceptable means of compliance** with the associated rule.

Consideration will be given to other methods of compliance that may be presented to the Director. When new standards, practices, or procedures are found to be acceptable they will be added to the appropriate AC.

Purpose

This AC provides guidance material for aerodrome operators on establishing and managing user groups to assist them in the process, and to support the more effective operation of user groups in cases where this may be necessary.

Related Rules

This AC related to Civil Aviation Rule Part 139 - *Aerodromes Certification, Operation and Use*.

Change Notice

This is an initial issue of AC139-17.

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Introduction

Aerodrome safety is greatly enhanced when all aerodrome users meet on a regular basis to discuss issues, review changes and propose safety improvements. Experience has shown that the number of incidents and aviation related concerns reported at aerodromes reduces when the aerodrome operator makes use of an aerodrome user group. This is a forum for identifying safety issues and developing any limitations and operational conditions on the use of the aerodrome.

The CAA strongly supports the formation and operation of aerodrome user groups at all aerodromes. The CAA takes very seriously recommendations made and issues raised by what it sees as the collective voice of persons involved in operations on the aerodrome and the airspace in its vicinity.

An aerodrome user group is also the best forum to address any safety concerns identified by an aerodrome user; to discuss the impact of any proposed changes to the aerodrome environment or to the type of operations conducted on the aerodrome, and to monitor and amend if necessary the operational conditions for the aerodrome that are published in the Aeronautical Information Publication New Zealand (AIPNZ).

The purpose of a user group is to facilitate development and co-ordination of procedures for the safe use of an aerodrome and associated airspace. The aim being that the operators will “own” the procedures adapted to suit an area and type of operation. This also fits the philosophy of “participant responsibility”.

It is also an important component in the operation of a safety management system for the operation of the aerodrome.

The purpose of this Advisory Circular (AC) is to provide guidance on the formation and operation of an aerodrome user group. The CAA Aviation Safety Advisors may assist in this regard if requested. Contact details for the CAA Aviation Safety Advisors are contained in the CAA Vector magazine, or on the CAA website

www.caa.govt.nz/about_caa/contact_caa_staff/safety_promo.htm

Composition of User Groups

The user group should comprise representatives of all persons or organisations whose activities can impact on the safety, regularity, and efficiency of operations associated with the aerodrome.

These may include:

- Scheduled airline operators
- Local aeroplane operators
- Helicopter operators
- Flying schools
- Airways Corporation of New Zealand
- Microlight clubs
- Glider clubs
- Parachute organisations

- Model aeroplane clubs
- Contractors who are employed on a regular basis to perform airfield maintenance such as grass cutting, weed spraying, etc.
- CAA Aviation Safety Advisors and other CAA personnel if required for specific issues.

All of these organisations have their own needs and engage in activities that can impact upon the activities of others. The safety and efficiency of all are enhanced if these needs and activities are aired in the forum of a user group and agreement reached on the conduct of aerodrome operations.

Operation of a User Group

General

There are already many user groups operating effectively in New Zealand and no two operate in the same way. Each has evolved into an organisation best suited to the environment of the particular aerodrome.

The aerodrome operator is ultimately responsible for the safe operation of the aerodrome and the promulgation of limitations and operational conditions. However, the responsibility for managing these functions is often delegated to an operator on the aerodrome who has more aircraft operational expertise than the aerodrome operator.

Setting up a User Group

The aerodrome operator should convene the first meeting and invite all relevant people. If requested, the CAA Aviation Safety Adviser will be able to provide guidance. The purpose of the user group should be explained, and the attendees invited to suggest areas in which the safety and regularity of aircraft operations could be improved.

From these discussions a person needs to be appointed to chair the group and this may or may not be the aerodrome operator. An action plan should be agreed to correct any issues raised, and the date for the next meeting established.

Frequency

User group meetings should be scheduled at intervals appropriate to the volume and complexity of operations at the aerodrome. Where the volume and complexity is high, meetings should be scheduled for up to six times per year. In the case of an aerodrome with only isolated traffic, twice a year may be sufficient.

Special meetings should also be called following an incident or accident or when a serious issue is raised, or when a new operator or a new type of operation is proposed for the aerodrome. Special meetings should also be called when major works are proposed on the aerodrome that may impact airfield operations.

Agenda

An agenda for each meeting should be produced and circulated to each member of the user group prior to each meeting. This agenda may be standard for each meeting and only amended as and when required.

Amongst the items that discussed at a user group meeting are:

- Airport operational issues.
- Proposed amendments to aerodrome layout, or proposed works on aerodromes.
- Airspace issues.
- Review of any safety incidents or accidents.
- Review of published aerodrome data and operational procedures contained in the AIPNZ.
- Review and co-ordinate feedback on any airspace amendment proposals.
- Requirement for any traffic rules to accommodate an organisation with special needs, e.g. gliders, helicopter training, model aircraft etc.
- Any type of activity commencing on or off the aerodrome that may have an impact on aerodrome operations.
- An activity which previously had special procedures developed for it and is no longer operating.
- Issues raised by any member of the group.

Follow up action

Where issues have been raised and follow up action has been proposed to mitigate those issues, the aerodrome operator needs to ensure that any action proposed will not be in breach of Part 139 or any other civil aviation rule, or be inconsistent with the operator's Part 139 exposition.

Where there is concern over the implications of any proposed follow up action, the aerodrome operator should consult with the CAA first before carrying out the proposed action.

Minutes

Minutes should be taken at each meeting and retained for future reference. Where decisions have been made or action points agreed to, the minutes need to clearly show the decision made or whom is responsible for any follow up action. Minutes need to be distributed to each member of the user group as soon as practicable following the meeting to ensure that members have the opportunity to undertake any action required.

Aeronautical Studies

An aeronautical study is a tool used to review aerodrome and airspace processes and procedures to ensure that safety criteria in place are appropriate. User groups can assist in safety reviews or aeronautical studies as they are able to provide assistance to aerodrome operators when considering changes to the aerodrome environment. Advisory Circular AC139-15 provides information and guidance to assist aerodrome operators and other parties to undertake an aeronautical study.