

Bureau of Land Management

Aviation Plan

Las Cruces District Office

2009

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I. Introduction

A. Purpose/Policy

The Las Cruces District Aviation Plan has been developed to ensure a safe and consistent aviation management program. This plan is meant to be an operational document and is supplemental to Bureau 9400 Manual, Departmental Manual (D.M.) 350-354 and the BLM-New Mexico State Aviation Plan.

B. Objectives

The objective of this Aviation Plan is to provide guidelines and polices for the safe, efficient and economical use of aircraft in the performance of the BLM mission. This plan defines the responsibilities and authorities for aviation duties in the Las Cruces District Office. This plan defines local procedures and policy as they relate to aviation activities.

II. Flight Hazards, Military Training Routes, Restricted Airspace

A. Flight hazards

Elevations within the Gila-Las Cruces Zone range from approximately 3,000 to 11,000 feet. Daytime summer temperatures range from approximately 70 to 110 degrees. Therefore, density altitude is one of the greatest hazards within the Zone.

Other known hazards include:

- High voltage power lines
- Communication and MET towers throughout the District
- Aerostat balloon in the Deming to Columbus corridor. 32 01' 30" x 107 52' 00"
- High velocity and erratic winds with frequent downbursts
- Multiple military training routes and large military operating areas within the Zone.
- Commercial and private aircraft

B. Procedures

The LCDO has several low altitude Military Training Routes (MTRs). Much of this traffic is from low-level military jet operations and occurs from treetop heights to 1,000 feet AGL. Military aircraft **do not** have radio contact and **are not** under radar surveillance. **IT IS A SEE AND BE SEEN SITUATION.** The following procedures will be followed to help reduce the potential conflicts between military aircraft and BLM flights.

1. All aircraft operations must refer to current Aeronautical Sectional Charts for New Mexico prior to operating to insure that operations will not be in restricted or high hazard areas. It will be the pilots' responsibility to check these charts during pre-mission planning. The aircraft flight manager will not allow the mission to proceed if there appears to be an unmitigated airspace confliction on the intended route. Always keep in mind that military aircraft can occur in any area within the LCDO.

2. The Las Cruces District Office and the Silver City Dispatch Center will keep an up-to-date known aerial hazards map for the Gila/Las Cruces Zone showing communications towers, transmission lines and other flight hazards. This map also shows Military Operating Areas (MOAs), Military Training Routes (MTRs) and restricted airspace.
3. Any flights east of the Rio Grande River or in Otero County need to assure through Dispatch that airspace deconfliction has occurred with the White Sands Missile Range and Fort Bliss. See SW MOB Guide 24.17.2.
4. Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) will be requested through the Silver City Dispatch Center when it is appropriate. It is important to follow established procedures and policy on implementing and terminating any TFR for any incident. These can be found in the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.
5. Any sightings of low-flying jets must be reported to the Silver City Dispatch Center. They will promptly notify all other agency aircraft operating in the area. Reports should include approximate altitude above the terrain, location, direction of travel and type of aircraft.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Las Cruces District Manager

The District Manager has the overall responsibility for the aviation program within the office.

B. Fire Management Officer/Unit Aviation Manager

The Fire Management Officer serves as the Unit Aviation Manager and as such provides oversight, supervision and guidance for all aviation operations on the Las Cruces District. The FMO has functional responsibilities in the following areas;

1. Develops local aviation procedures based upon DOI, Aviation Management Directorate (AMD) and Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) policies and guidelines.
2. Develops the Aviation Plan for the Las Cruces District. Reviews and updates plan annually.
3. Coordinates aviation safety and operational training.
4. Conducts periodic reviews and evaluations of the overall aviation program and for specific projects where aviation resources are used.
5. Enforces aviation regulations and safety policies.
6. Reviews and approves project aviation plans.

7. Responsible for ensuring that all safety procedures are followed for all flights and projects requiring aviation resources.
8. Coordinates aviation activities between interagency partners.
9. Briefs the District Manager on changes in policy, regulations and other aviation subjects as necessary.
10. Coordinates aviation training and operations with interagency partners and cooperators.
11. Seeks advice from and informs the State Aviation Manager (SAM) on local aviation operations. Sends a copy of all project aviation safety plans to the SAM.
12. Has internet access for IMs, IBs, OPMs and USDI manuals located at www.nbc.gov/amd.

C. Silver City Dispatch Center

The Silver City Dispatch Center will be responsible for the ordering, tracking and dispatching of all flights for the Las Cruces District. Additional responsibilities are:

1. Orders and schedules aircraft using an Aircraft Rental Agreement (ARA) or the On-Call Small Helicopter Contract from the Aviation Management source list for special use aircraft.
2. Maintains zone-wide known aerial hazards map.
3. Ensures that the Aircraft Incident/Accident Response Guide for the District is complete and updated annually and posted in the Dispatch Center and the District Office.
4. Initiates search and rescue procedures in the event of an overdue aircraft.
5. Ensures that flight following is conducted on all flights. Ensures that all flights are documented and logs kept as per agency requirements.
6. Ensures that Automated Flight Following (AFF) procedures are followed on flights where AFF is installed and operational in the aircraft.
7. Is delegated the authority by the Unit Aviation Manager to stop any flight that is considered to be a threat to the safety of any personnel.
8. Ensures that all personnel working aircraft in Dispatch are properly trained as aviation qualified dispatchers. Conducts on-the-job training or sends personnel to formalized aviation dispatch training.

D. Project Leader/Flight Manager

The project leader will be responsible for planning, coordinating and safely implementing the use

of aircraft on projects where aircraft use is required. The Project flight manager has the following responsibility:

1. May serve as the flight manager on flights.
2. Fills out the project aviation safety plan (risk analysis or JHA) and submits to the Unit Aviation Manager within 10 days of the planned flight.
3. Provides necessary information on the **Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule** form, obtains signatures of authorizing officials, completes **Hazard Analysis and Dispatch/Aviation Manager Checklist** for all special use flights, completes a passenger manifest and flight hazard map and forwards all this to Silver City Dispatch.
4. Plan and discuss the proposed flight routes with Dispatch, supervisor and unit aviation manager including stops and fuel needs.
5. Coordinates flight following between aircraft and Dispatch.
6. Check Pilot Qualification Card and Aircraft Data Card prior to initial use.
7. Ensures that pilot and passengers receive a safety and mission briefing before the flight. Ensures that pilot gives all passengers a pre-flight briefing. Ensures all safety equipment is available and serviceable.
8. Ensures that all logistical support for the flight is prepared and ready, including trained personnel (i.e. helitack), supplies and equipment.
9. On conclusion of the flight, completes the Aircraft Use Report, AMD-23. Ensures that all signatures are obtained and that all forms are completely filled out. Sends with vendor or sends one copy to the National Business Center-Aviation Management (AM) for vendor payment.
10. Is responsible for seeing that flight operations proceed safely, in accordance with the flight plan, and that on special use flights, the proper personal protective equipment is used by all personnel. The flight manager has the authority to cancel any flight based on safety concerns.

IV. General Policy

Aviation related needs, requests, procedural matters, training, safety and questions should be routed through the Unit Aviation Manager (Las Cruces District FMO) for review and action.

All flights will have a flight plan. For projects, a project aviation safety plan must be completed and approved. For point to point charter flights, an FAA flight plan will be filed electronically or by telephone by the PIC (Pilot in Command).

All special use activities must be flight followed either by Silver City Dispatch or Alamogordo Dispatch or through other approved means (i.e. AFF).

All personnel must be properly trained and qualified for the position that they are to serve in. The minimum qualification for any flight crew member on a special use flight is currency in the AM sponsored B-3, *Basic Helicopter/Airplane Safety*. Re-currency training in aviation safety is required every 3 years. This training is now available on-line on the AM web site. Helicopter qualifications are found in the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG). See OPM No. 06-04 for more information on the aviation users training program.

All flights with passengers will require a passenger manifest. A copy of the manifest will be kept on the ground during all flights.

Only AMD approved aircraft and pilots will be used for any flight. No exceptions will be allowed. All vendor aircraft and pilots will be certified by the FAA under 14 CFR, Part 121, 125, 127, 133, 135 or 137 as appropriate.

Smoking is not permitted on any aircraft.

Employees are not permitted to fly on restricted use aircraft (i.e. cargo only) unless authorized by the employing agency.

All emergencies, aviation incidents, near misses or accidents will be immediately reported to the Unit Aviation Manager and documented through the use of SafeComs.

All passengers on a flight will cooperate with the pilot at all times and not interfere with his duties especially during take-offs and landings. All passengers should always be on the lookout for flight hazards and make them known to the pilot.

V. Procurement of Flight Services.

A. Contracts

End Product contracts such as aerial spraying are not done through the AMD.

Most flight services for BLM will require an ARA or the use of the DOI On Call Small Helicopter Contract. If the project flight costs are anticipated to be above \$2,500 a Best Value Determination must be completed.

If the project flight time is anticipated to be above \$25,000 an ARA cannot be used but the DOI On Call Small Helicopter Contract can be used. If necessary, AMD will obtain the flight services usually through a short-term negotiated contract.

Other contract services are available and include the use of USFS fire aircraft, on-call air tactical contract, SEAT contracts, etc. The BLM also maintains MOUs with agencies such as the New Mexico National Guard and the US Customs and Border Patrol which allow for BLM personnel to ride on their aircraft under limited circumstances.

B. Aircraft Rental Agreement

AMD maintains a list of carded aircraft and pilots that can be rented for short periods of time for special use activities and point to point travel. The aircraft and pilot source list is found on the AMD home page at www.nbc.gov/amd.

The Unit Aviation Manager can assist in ordering any aircraft on this list. If an employee wishes, they can fill out an Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule and send it to Silver City Dispatch Center for processing. A 3 day minimum lead time is necessary to order and schedule the aircraft and pilot.

VI. Pilot and Aircraft Requirements

A. Pilots

Generally AMD or Forest Service approved and carded pilots will be used on most BLM flights. Cooperator pilots are issued letters of authorization and are not carded but can carry BLM passengers. Under some agreements (Drug/Law enforcement MOUs), the cooperating agencies are given a blanket authorization for all their pilots who meet our standards.

Military pilots cannot be used without prior approval from AMD (refer to IB 94-1). In certain circumstances Air National Guard pilots may be used for certain special use activities. Prior approval from AMD is always required. Contact the State Aviation Manager for more information.

No Department of Interior (DOI) employees with a private pilot license will be authorized to fly any government mission as a pilot. All DOI missions require pilots to have, at a minimum, a commercial pilot certificate.

B. Aircraft

Only AMD approved aircraft will be used on BLM projects and missions.

All aircraft must be certified by the FAA, Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 135 or 137.

Military aircraft cannot be used without prior approval from AMD. Contact the State Aviation Manager for more information on using military aircraft.

All aircraft are required to have the following equipment:

- Fire extinguisher
- VHF-AM radio (victor)
- Seat belts: including shoulder harness type for front seat passengers
- Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT)
- First aid kit

The location of this required equipment should be given to all passengers during the pilot safety briefing.

VII. Operating Standards

A. Point to point flights (direct from airport to airport)

All point to point aircraft flight requests will be made using the Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule form (9400-1).

All point to point flights are not required to have flight following with agency dispatch although it is a good idea if it is available. The correct procedure is for the pilot to file an FAA flight plan. Any deviation from the flight plan must be reported to Dispatch. On long distance flights requiring multiple stops within the Southwest Area, the pilot or flight manager will call Silver City Dispatch at each stop to inform them of their flight status. Upon terminating the flight the pilot will notify the FSS and terminate the flight plan. The pilot or flight manager for the flight will call Silver City Dispatch to verify that the aircraft has arrived at the destination. Flights that require an overnight stop, the pilot or flight manager will notify Silver City Dispatch that the flight has been terminated for the night.

B. Special Use Activities

All fire related flights require a resource order which is considered the requesting form for the flight. Any other activities considered special use (game counts, movement of material, etc.) will require a written aviation plan. This aviation plan will need prior approval of the Unit Aviation Manager.

Special use activities are the utilization of airplanes and helicopters in support of programs which are not point-to-point flights, are mission specific, often conducted below 500' AGL and require special considerations due to their functional use. Aircraft and pilots shall be approved for each special use activity.

Employees engaged in special use activities must meet the training requirements outlined in the Aviation User Training Program (OPM -06-4) and in the BLM National Aviation Plan.

Personal protective equipment may be required for special use activities. Policy and detailed information are outlined in the Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) Handbook.

All special use activities in the Las Cruces District will be flight followed by Silver City Dispatch or by other means as approved by the Unit Aviation Manager.

C. Flight Following

Flight following on special use flights is required and the procedure should be documented on Form 9400-1. Check-in is normally done with Silver City Dispatch Center by radio, every 15 minutes during flight and at take-offs and landings. Flights over the Lincoln Zone will be coordinated and flight followed by the Alamogordo Dispatch Center. The break between Zones is

the eastern boundary line for Dona Ana and Sierra Counties along the western edge of Otero County.

Information required at the check-in:

Current general geographic location

Latitude/longitude (Degrees, Minutes) if GPS equipped

Aircraft heading (use magnetic compass on the aircraft)

Destination or what the aircraft is doing (i.e. Circling, recon, etc.)

There may be special cases where flight following is done through an on-site (local) helibase or other approved method. Prior approval of the Unit Aviation Manager is required and the following conditions must be met:

The same interval of 15 minutes will be used for position checks.

A dedicated on-site radio operator must record the information in a log and must have communication with Dispatch and be able to notify them on an hourly basis on the status of the aircraft and at takeoffs and landings.

There may be areas within the District where there are dead spots for radio coverage. Once back in contact, the pilot will immediately notify Dispatch and give check-in information.

Aircraft working on fires may be flight following through the Incident ATGS (Air Tactical Group Supervisor) or incident helibase. Periodically the ATGS will notify Dispatch of the status of firefighting aircraft on the incident.

All computers in the Silver City Dispatch Center have access to the Automated Flight Following (AFF) System. Each dispatcher will be able to access and use this system to flight follow aircraft. The use of the AFF system will not supersede normal check-in procedures.

Load calculations will be done on all helicopter flights. Load calculations will be done at every fuel stop and when weather conditions change significantly. Manifests will be completed for every load and kept with radio logs as part of the project record. See the Interagency Helicopter Operating Guide (IHOG) for more information on helicopter operations.

VIII. Overdue Aircraft

Any aircraft which has not been accounted for 15 minutes after the last scheduled check-in will be considered overdue. The following procedures will be initiated by the Dispatcher:

1. Continue to try and make radio and cell phone contact with overdue aircraft.
2. Complete the overdue aircraft information sheet in the Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Plan.

3. Conduct a telephone search of potential destinations.
4. Notify the Unit Aviation Manager (505 644-6734).
5. Contact originating air base.

At 30 minutes after the last scheduled check-in:

1. Notify the New Mexico State Police of the overdue aircraft.
2. Notify the FAA Flight Service Station of the overdue aircraft.
3. Continue to try to contact the aircraft via radio or cell phone.
4. Contact District Manager (575 644-8777) and State Aviation Manager (505 660-5927).
5. Notify AM Aviation Safety Manager (1 888 464-7427)

See Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Plan for details, names and phone numbers. A copy of this plan is available in the Fire Management Office and in the District Managers office.

IX. Aircraft Mishap Notification and Reporting

All aircraft mishaps, mechanical problems, incidents, near misses and accidents will be reported to Dispatch and the Unit Aviation Manager as soon as possible. The Unit Aviation Manager will notify the proper authorities and will assist in the filing of reports and *SafeComs*.

X. Aircraft Use Reports- OAS-23's

The OAS-23 document is a three part form used for recording aircraft use and as a record for payment to the aircraft vendor. All flights activities are paid for out of the Finance Center in Denver, Colorado. Accurate and prompt completion of this form is important if the vendor is to be paid in a timely manner.

The form is used for both fixed wing and rotor wing aircraft use.

Training in filling out the OAS-23 is available through AMD. All personnel who are required to record aircraft time are required to complete this 2 hour course on filling out the OAS-23. This training course is now available through AMD training over the Internet.

Remember that the white copy must be sent to AMD, the yellow copy to Silver City Dispatch or the Unit Aviation Manager and the vendor retains the blue copy. The Unit Aviation Manager will retain a copy to reconcile the payment with the OPAC billing statement.

XI. Aviation Training

All employees who participate in special use activities as an aircrew member are required to take the AM sponsored B-3 course. This course has a currency requirement of 3 years. This currency training is now offered on-line at the AMD web site.

A passenger is any individual aboard an aircraft that does not perform the function of a flight crew member. Passengers must receive a briefing by the pilot or an aircrew member for all missions.

Employees who participate regularly in aviation activities will need to take additional training. These training modules are available during AMD sponsored Aviation Centered Education (ACE) sessions. Some courses are available on the training link on the internet through the AMD home page.

The DOI's Aviation User's Training Program is a "non-fire" system, distinct from the National Wildland Coordinating Group's (NWCG) Wildland Fire Qualification System (PMS 310-1). Personnel serving in NWCG positions need only meet the qualification and currency requirements required in 310-1. In all other instances Bureau personnel shall meet the training and currency requirements listed within OPM -04 and the *Interagency Aviation Use and Management Qualifications Guide*. Course equivalencies can also be found in the *Interagency Aviation Use and Management Qualifications Guide*.

All fire or NWCG sponsored training will be documented in the employees Red Card file and in the Incident Qualifications & Certification System (IQCS).

XII. Violation of Policy and/or Regulations

Violation of national, state or local aviation policy and procedures will not be tolerated. Management may take disciplinary action against any employee who willfully disregards or knowingly violates aviation policy.

Any employee ordering an aircraft outside of normal ordering procedures and not within the scope of their authority may be held financially liable for any cost incurred by the government for that aircraft.

An employee who flagrantly ignores safety policy and procedures may be reprimanded and barred from working in future aviation activities by the agency.