

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I. Introduction

Congress has charged the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to administer and manage the national airspace in the public interest to ensure the safety of aircraft and the efficient utilization of airspace. The national airspace is a limited natural resource. Airspace users, rights, rules and responsibilities are complex.

Airspace coordination and deconfliction is a shared responsibility among ALL aviation users and schedulers. The primary focus in airspace coordination is mid-air collision avoidance. When performing most agency aviation tasks, the pilot's attention will be diverted out of the aircraft towards the ground, conflicting with their primary responsibility to "see and avoid" other aircraft or obstructions. Other users of this airspace may have similar workload distractions.

In the past several years, there has been a marked increase in airspace-related conflicts (e.g., near mid-air collisions, intrusions into Temporary Flight Restriction areas, etc.). As the airspace becomes more complex and congested, effective communication processes are needed that will identify issues and facilitate our coordination efforts.

The Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have embarked on an airspace coordination program to reduce risks. Efforts are coordinated with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the FAA to minimize risk during flight activities and view airspace coordination as a shared responsibility of the pilots, dispatchers, trainers, on-scene personnel and all managers of resources, operations, safety and airspace.

Agency personnel such as pilots, dispatchers and aviation managers who are familiar with the organization of the National Airspace System (as defined in chapter 3) will be able to adequately deconflict competing flight activity with respect to safety, environmental concerns and operational requirements.

All aviation activities proposed by agency personnel will occur in the National Airspace System (NAS) and many of them will occur within or adjacent to a variety of Special Use Airspace (SUA) and other airspace for special use (i.e.

Military Training Routes, Low Altitude Tactical Navigation Areas (LATN), etc.) ***As always, it is the pilot's responsibility to be familiar with the airspace of intended flight and to comply with all rules and regulations for flight through each type of airspace.***

An understanding and awareness of the procedures in this Guide will improve aviation safety through coordinated use of the NAS. A consistent approach will also maximize agency effectiveness as resource managers and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

II. Background

The Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide revision was a result of a team effort involving the DOI, USFS, DoD, and the FAA. The team decided it would best serve the participating agencies if some educational material was included to explain the actions of the agencies in respect to airspace coordination. For example, material explaining the dispatching system was placed in the Guide to facilitate DoD Airspace Managers in understanding agency structure.

The term “agency” used throughout the Guide refers to land management agencies who use the Guide (such as USFS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service (NPS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), etc.). The term “agency personnel” refers to land management personnel.

The target audience identified by the Airspace Guide Revision team includes an extensive list of users including: agency personnel (Aviation Program Managers, Unit Aviation Officers, Pilots, Dispatchers, On-Scene Personnel - Air Tactical Group Supervisors, Air Operations Branch Directors, Air Support Group Supervisors, Helicopter Managers, etc.), DoD Airspace Managers and Schedulers, and associated FAA personnel.

Refer to Appendix ‘I’ for an expanded list.

III. Purpose, Objectives and Goals

The purpose of this Guide is to promote aviation safety and to promote airspace coordination with respect to environmental issues. This is an educational process that will contribute to a clear understanding of the complex nature of the airspace in which aviators fly. Agency personnel will be able to deal with airspace issues using procedures designed to enhance the coordination of agency flights within the NAS. **The Guide promotes safe, consistent, and standardized approaches to issues involving airspace and federal land management responsibilities.**

The objectives of the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide are to:

1. Describe the components of the NAS and to define airspace management and coordination responsibilities among the various agencies and users of the NAS.
2. Describe those processes and procedures that an agency should employ so that users may:
 - conduct flight missions safely within the NAS and
 - coordinate airspace issues relating to the environment.

The goals of the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide are:

1. Provide educational material aimed at both agency and military aviation managers that will contribute to a clear understanding of the complex nature of the airspace in which we all share.
2. Provide agency aviation managers with the proper procedures designed to enhance the coordination of aircraft within the national airspace.
3. Promote safe, consistent, and standardized approaches to addressing airspace and land management responsibilities on and above lands managed by military and civilian land management agencies.
4. Describe the components of the National Airspace System (NAS).

5. Identify airspace management and coordination responsibilities among both the civilian and military agencies sharing the national airspace.
6. Describe the processes and procedures that an agency should use so that aircraft may operate safely within the NAS.

To accomplish these goals, it is essential that all land and airspace managers be familiar with the procedures contained in this Guide. Remember however, that the final responsibility for collision avoidance rests with the Pilot-in-Command to “see and avoid.”

IV. Authority

The Guide is published under the auspices of the National Fire Aviation Coordination Group as tasked to the Interagency Airspace Natural Resource Coordination Group (IANRCG). The aviation directives of participating agencies contain the authority to require implementation of this guide.

V. Participating Agencies

The following agencies have been involved in the development of this guide:

- USDA - Forest Service
- DOI - Office of Aircraft Services (OAS)
- DOI - Bureau of Land Management
- DOI - Fish and Wildlife Services
- DOI - Bureau of Indian Affairs
- DOI - National Park Service
- USN - United States Navy
- USAF - United States Air Force, Air National Guard and Reserves
- United States Army
- Participating States and Local Agencies
- FAA - Federal Aviation Administration

VI. Guide Organization

The chapters of the guide are organized to assist participants and users in identifying the standards and operational procedures for airspace coordination. The appendices provide specific user information and other job aids.

VII. Ordering and Distribution

This guide will be distributed via the Interagency Airspace Coordination website (www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace) where the user will be responsible for printing the guide. Currently there are no plans to print or publish this guide through Publication Management System at the National Interagency Fire Center.

VIII. Review and Revisions

Agencies were invited to participate in a national review of the Guide. Users are encouraged to recommend changes and improvements to this document through their respective aviation safety manager. Revisions to the Guide will be posted on the Interagency Airspace Coordination website (www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace).

FIGURE 1-1 Example of Aviation Traffic in Continental United States

