CHAPTER 11
Temporary Towers and Airport Closures

I. Introduction

Airspace coordination with other users of the National Airspace System is essential. Sometimes there may be a need within an incident operation, either at uncontrolled airports or at helibases, to obtain professional air traffic control services from the FAA by ordering a Temporary Tower.

Current agreements with the FAA only provide for certified and trained Air Traffic Controllers as requested for emergencies. Controllers must be currently licensed and certified. No provisions have been implemented between the FAA and the Department of Defense for agencies to utilize Department of Defense Air Traffic Controllers or Towers.

Privately based (e.g. retired controllers or contractors) with contract proposals to provide air traffic control services for agency incidents should be referred to the FAA. As per the FAA, land management agencies should not contract with private individuals to provide air traffic control service. Private individuals or companies are welcome to contract with the FAA. The FAA remains our nation's airspace manager and has agreed to provide us temporary tower services on an as needed basis.

II. Airport Operations and Closures

There are numerous operational guides that address flight operations at an airport. These should be consulted when setting up airport operations.

THE PRESENCE OF A TFR OVER AN AIRPORT DOES NOT CLOSE THE AIRPORT. (REF. CH. 6 "AIRPORT TRAFFIC" SECTION)

The proximity of an incident to an airport, or the volume of aviation activity generated at an airport by an incident may necessitate the closure of an airport. VFR airport traffic is allowed inside a TFR for ingress or egress (ref. TFR 91.137 (a) 2).

An airport can only be closed by its "owner", which may be a private citizen, a municipality, State or other entity. Airport closure is a highly sensitive issue. Aviation safety or other valid concerns should be described in the request for closure. Requests to close an airport is usually implemented by contacting the local airport authority or airport manager.

Airport owners are required to close an airport for the protection of users if hazardous conditions, including construction activities, cannot be mitigated through physical marking and the use of NOTAMs. Airports may also be closed for aeronautical events such as airshows, fly-ins and aviation conventions. However, the closure should be well publicized in advance and the appropriate NOTAMs must be issued.

Phone numbers for airport management may be listed in various sources, such as the Airport Directory or from the FAA. An alternative source for this information would be the local FAA or State Aeronautical Division. Management of airports on agency land (e.g. USFS back country airstrips) should be carefully researched. In some cases, even though the airstrip is located on agency land, it might be leased to the State. In that case, the State Aeronautical Division would be considered the owner or manager and would have to be consulted for closure.

III. Determination of Need for Temporary Towers

Agency aviation management, prior to ordering a Temporary Tower, should validate the need. This should be a joint decision between the Incident Management Team, FAA and the local Unit Aviation Officer. Airport managers, pilots and aircraft managers should also be consulted.

FIGURE 11-1 West Yellowstone Temporary Tower, 1988

A risk assessment should be completed as part of the risk management process used to analyze the necessity of ordering a Temporary Tower. One such assessment can be found in Chapter 3 of the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG).

FAA Temporary Towers should be activated when conditions are such that positive aircraft control will enhance safety. Situations that increase the hazards to both participating and non-participating aircraft may include:

- Operations being conducted from, or in proximity to, an uncontrolled airport; or,
- A high volume of aircraft traffic anticipated in close proximity to each other; or,

- A high frequency of non-incident aircraft using common airspace; or,
- Special events being conducted adjacent to the incident or at the airport where incident aircraft are operating; or,
- Visibility conditions such that flight operations would be enhanced through use of certified controllers; or,
- Risk assessment of involved airspace indicates the need for Air Traffic Control.

IV. Tower Ordering/Set-Up Process

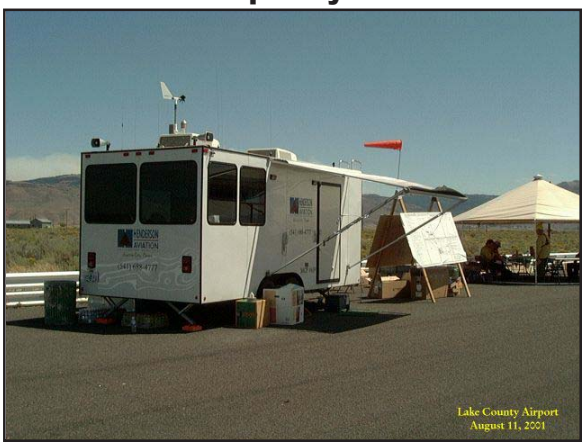
Temporary Tower is not by definition a structure; it is usually two FAA people, who may or may not arrive with the equipment (including radios) they need to operate. The incident should plan to order support equipment and radios through established ordering channels. Shelter from the elements should be provided for FAA personnel to reduce fatigue and improve safety conditions while they are working. Vendors offering well equipped helibase or airbase operations trailers should be considered.

A. Dispatch submits a resource order through their appropriate channels for an FAA Tower as an "A" (Aircraft) request, identifying date and time, location and projected operational periods (e.g. sunrise to sunset). Consult the National Mobilization Guide or Figure 11-3 for the Temporary Tower form.

B. The FAA will be responsible for staffing appropriately to meet the request and handle any internal requirements. They will rotate controllers as determined by their schedule and union requirements.

C. The local Unit Aviation Officer is responsible for providing a thorough briefing to the FAA controllers; the controllers should participate in the daily briefings with pilots and other aviation personnel. Refer to Chapter 7, section IIc, Airspace Briefings.

FIGURE 11-2 Example of a Trailer Rented for a Temporary Tower



D. If an Incident Management Team is in place, the Incident Air Operations Branch Director should prepare a briefing on the tower facility and include details in the ICS 220 Air Operations Summary.

E. Ensure adequate radio kit(s) are available for use. The 720-channel VHF-AM radio is required, and a VHF-FM radio is occasionally needed. (Note that some helibase/airbase operations trailers come with complete radio packages).

F. Request that the FAA issues a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) that informs the public of the change in status of an airport or helibase from uncontrolled to controlled airspace, and that identifies the radio frequency for contact with the Tower. Once the frequencies and hours of operation of the Temporary Tower are established, this information needs to be disseminated to appropriate dispatch and aviation personnel including airtanker and helibases.

G. Since the FAA does not always have the support equipment necessary to establish a temporary tower, the incident should order support equipment through established ordering channels. Shelter from the FAA should be provided for FAA personnel to reduce fatigue and improve safety conditions while they are working. Vendors offering well equipped Helibase or Airbase trailers are an option to be considered.

H. Figures 11-4 and 11-5 are Temporary Tower Checklists for Start-Up and Emergency Procedures.

FIGURE 11-3 Temporary Tower Request Form

TEMPORARY TOWER REQUEST FORM

(Note - this form should be used in conjunction with the checklists that follow in this guide.)
Please attach this form to the Resource Order and forward both forms to the appropriate FAA Regional Operations Center (ROC), through established ordering channels.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Incident Name _____Management/Fiscal Code _____
Resource Order Number _____Request Number _____ Date_____

II. POINTS OF CONTACT

	Name/Agency	Telephone
Ordering Unit	_____	_____
Air Ops/Air Support	_____	_____
Local or Expanded Dispatch	_____	_____
Geographic Area Coordination Ctr	_____	_____
National Interagency Coordination Ctr	_____	_____
FAA POC at ROC	_____	_____

Name / Phone Number of Airport Owner / Operator_____
Has the Airport Owner been notified? YES NO
Requested Operational Hours: _____
Estimated Length of Duration: _____

III. SUPPORT INFORMATION

Closest City/Town _____ State _____
Where is the proposed location of the temporary tower (Select one or explain):
Airport Name & FAA Code_____Helibase_____
Incident Command Post _____
Other_____

Is a facility available on site for use as a tower (Select one or explain)?
FBO Site/Room rental/etc_____Rental Trailer _____
Facility to be built on site_____Other _____
Conditions to expect for overnight at site: Camp _____ Hotel_____

Is a vehicle (Gov't or rental) available for tower personnel? YES NO
Please attach detailed driving directions to the reporting site
Note Road closures, hazardous conditions, easiest route of travel, etc

IV. EQUIPMENT SURVEY: Refer to the checklist that follows in this guide.

What equipment do you currently have (radios, etc) for use by tower personnel?

What equipment do you need? (radios, etc)

Have you completed an inventory of equipment?

FIGURE 11-4 Temporary Tower Checklist, Page 1

TEMPORARY TOWER CHECKLIST START-UP & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES **Page 1 of 2**

Location: _____ By: _____ Date: ___/___/___

The following should be provided to FAA personnel before travel to their assignment:

- ❑ Travel directions. Give specific location or address of expanded dispatch for resource order check-in.
- ❑ Specific Location of Incident Command Post and airbase (fixed- and rotary-wing).
- ❑ Expanded Dispatch/Initial Attack Dispatch points of contact and phone numbers.
- ❑ Points of Contact as appropriate: Local Unit Aviation Officer, Air Operations Branch Director and/or Air Support Group Supervisor, Helibase Manager.
- ❑ Conditions to expect. Consider the following: camp or hotel quarters, weather conditions, roads, helibase or airbase operations and meals.

Upon FAA's arrival, provide the following general knowledge for assignment:

- ❑ Check-in protocol.
- ❑ Lodging arrangements (how to get a hotel room), or how to obtain a sleeping bag, tent, etc. Minimize primitive conditions to mitigate fatigue for controllers. This is a safety and controller union issue.
- ❑ How the controllers are to order supplies for the tower, eating arrangements, etc. (e.g. through ASGS).
- ❑ Introduction to basic ICS, chain of command and flow structure: expanded dispatch and initial attack dispatch, unit aviation offider, air operations branch director, air support group supervisor, air tactical group supervisor, helibase manager, air tanker base manager.
- ❑ Unit and incident(s) communications plans, shift plans
- ❑ Demobilization or rotation protocol (FAA home unit and union rules will determine FAA personnel rotation).
- ❑ Transportation upon arrival, during assignment, rotation out and demobilization.
- ❑ Terminology (e.g. "What is a probeye?" "What is a ping pong ball machine?" "What is a fire shelter?")

Before tower is operational, air operations should:

- ❑ Provide FAA controllers personnel with a familiarization flight of the local area to help them understand the local area as pilots see it. Scope of this flight will vary depending upon whether controller are being used as tower control or area-wide flight following. Visit all aircraft operating facilities (helibase and fixed-wing bases) if possible. It is very advantageous to have the air tactical group supervisor conduct the familiarization trips.

FIGURE 11-5 Temporary Tower Checklist, Page 2

TEMPORARY TOWER CHECKLIST START-UP & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES **Page 2 of 2**

Location:_____ By: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Upon completion of the flight, a briefing should be held between the tower operators, the air operations branch director, the air tactical group supervisor, the air support group supervisor, the helibase manager and/or air tanker base manager, the fixed base operator, incident pilots and any local pilots continuing to operate from the airport or helibase. At this briefing, use their expertise to discuss the following:

- ❑ Site selection for towers.
  - Does a facility exist (deactivated tower, building, etc.)?
  - Could you use a rental trailer?
  - Does the facility have a good field or view for taxi, takeoff and approach?
- ❑ Examine existing helibase/airport procedures. If necessary, amend procedures temporarily to meet objectives. Consider:
  - Inbound/outbound flight paths, altitudes and reporting points.
  - Air traffic patterns to, from and around the incident.
  - Ground taxi patterns and departure sequence for helicopters and airplanes.
  - Communication procedures.
  - Procedure for obtaining frequency assignments (FAA and/or ATGS)
- ❑ Establish tower hours (Coordinate with supervisor or controller in charge).
- ❑ FAA rotation and duty day limitations.
- ❑ Ensure that the controllers do the following:
  - Issue NOTAM that tower is operational
  - Notify agencies that tower is operational
- ❑ Discuss fire survival (e.g., fire shelters, overrun of base or camp, etc.)
- ❑ Identify distractions and eliminate noise and heat.
- ❑ Discuss:
  - Empty weight and loaded weight for runways
  - Restrictions on runways
  - Aircraft performance and characteristics–weight
  - Procedures if your TFR overlaps the airport or helibase
  - The role of FAA if you have an intruder within your TFR
  - Air tanker needs
  - Local Airport Contacts
  - Noise abatement procedures
  - Other TFRs in the area
  - Procedure for TFR modification

- ❑ Upon shutdown, be sure to:
  - Plan close to tower in advance
    NOTE: FAA needs lead time for tower closure procedures to be put in effect
  - Close out NOTAM
  - Notify Units throughout agencies of tower closure
  - Close out aircraft resource order for temporary tower

V. Temporary Tower Supply List

The following list of items may be of value for tower operations. The number, size, type and maintenance supplies (e.g. batteries) needed should also be determined.

Check with the Air Operations Branch Director and the FAA controllers before ordering. Some items may not be necessary.

FIGURE 11-6 Temporary Tower Checklist for Supplies, Page 1

TEMPORARY TOWER CHECKLIST **SUPPLIES** **Page 1 of 1**

Location: _____ By: _____ Date: ___/___/___

- ❑ Anemometer
- ❑ Compass
- ❑ Binoculars
- ❑ Traffic Counter
- ❑ Wind and Alt Inst
- ❑ Temperature Instrument
- ❑ Light Gun–battery powered
- ❑ Wind Sock
- ❑ Clocks 24 hour–1 for local, 1 for (UTC) Zulu
- ❑ Goggles (if needed)
- ❑ Writing Table
- ❑ Roof/Sun cover
- ❑ Chairs
- ❑ Basic Office Supplies (pads, pens, pencils, tape, stamper, scissors, etc.)
- ❑ Generator (if needed)
- ❑ Extension Cord (if needed)

- ❑ Radios–main and battery back-up (edo-air)
- ❑ VHF radios
- ❑ Telephones (cellular or regular)
- ❑ UHF radios

- ❑ FAA 7230-10 Position Log
- ❑ FAA 7230-4 Daily Log
- ❑ ICS Unit Logs

- ❑ Bottled water/Water cooler
- ❑ Lights/Lamps
- ❑ Fans
- ❑ Flashlights
- ❑ Fire extinguisher
- ❑ Radio AM/FM

- ❑ Plotters
- ❑ Navigational Charts & Sectionals
- ❑ Forest maps
- ❑ State aeronautical chart
- ❑ Fire maps
- ❑ Airport diagram
- ❑ AFD Airport Facility Directory
- ❑ US Terminal Procedures (for approach plates)

NOTE: Consider ordering NFES 4300 which has SOME material that could be used as an FAA portable control tower. This kit is a portable battery operated VHF-AM aircraft base station consisting of a 760 Channel AM radio. If this kit is to be used as an FAA Temporary Tower, the resource order MUST be placed by the incident COML.