

# *Chapter 1*

## *Introduction*

### **I. Introduction**

Congress has charged the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to administer and manage the airspace in the public interest to insure the safety of aircraft and the efficient utilization of airspace. As national policy, preservation of the navigable airspace for aviation purposes receives primary emphasis. 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 (ie military test training missions.)

In the past several years, there has been a marked increase in airspace-related conflicts (eg; near mid-air collisions, intrusions into Temporary Flight Restriction areas, etc.). The potential adverse effects of other aircraft on resource management activities is an issue that is under study and has yet to be resolved. As the airspace becomes more complex and congested, we will need effective systems to identify issues and manage our coordination efforts.

The Department of Interior (DOI) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have embarked on an airspace coordination program to reduce risks. Airspace coordination is a shared responsibility of the pilot, dispatcher, on-scene personnel and management. We coordinate our efforts with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the FAA to ensure that our flight activity risk is reduced.

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 (ie Military Training Routes, Low Altitude Tactical Navigation Areas, 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.*

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 our effectiveness as resource managers and our compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

## II. Purpose and Objective

The overall 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 we 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.

**# To accomplish this objective, it is essential that all personnel involved in flight planning and operations read, understand and implement the procedures contained in the Guide.**

**# However, agency personnel should remember that the final assurance of collision avoidance rests with the Pilot-in-Command to " See and Avoid."**

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.

## III. 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.

## **VI. Participating Agencies**

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

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| # USDA - Forest Service             | # USN - United States Navy                                 |
| # DOI - Office of Aircraft Services | # USAF - United States Air Force and Air<br>National Guard |
| # DOI - Bureau of Land Management   | # United States Army                                       |
| # DOI - Fish and Wildlife Services  | # Participating States and Local Agencies                  |
| # DOI - Bureau of Indian Affairs    | # FAA - Federal Aviation Agency                            |
| # DOI - National Park Service       |  |

## **VII. Guide Organization**

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

## **VIII. Ordering and Distribution**

This guide is planned to be distributed via an Internet site where the user will be responsible for printing the guide. There are currently no plans to print or publish this guide through the National Interagency Fire Center.

## **IX. Review and Revisions**

Agency national aviation program managers and designees, as well as States, will review and authenticate the Guide. Cooperating agencies will be issued copies for their review. Users are encouraged to recommend changes and improvements to this document through their respective aviation safety manager. Revisions will be posted on the Internet after review by the Aviation Management Council (AMC).