

Unit Aviation Officers Conference

Airspace Coordination

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As of Nov 15th, 2002 fires burned 7.1 million acres and nearly doubled the ten year average. Fire season 2002 proved to be the most challenging in history. Firefighters were successful in suppressing 99% of all fires during initial attack. Only about 610 fires escaped to become large fires. This season will be remembered for its large timber fires. Colorado, Arizona (Rodeo-Chedisky fire was 468,638 acres) and Oregon recorded their largest fires in the last century. Airspace Coordination was extremely complex and faced new challenges. The Field Airspace Coordinator (Technical Specialist) proved invaluable in providing aid to both our dispatch and aviation communities.

SAFECOMS

SAFECOMS is our method of tracking incidents involving TFR intrusions and Near Mid Air Collisions. Two websites are available to monitor airspace SAFECOMS:
DOI: www.oas.gov (click on SAFECOMS) and USFS: www.aviation.fs.fed.us

An analysis of USFS/DOI airspace related SAFECOMS reveals the following information:

Airspace SAFECOMS received: 162
Number of TFR intrusions: 75
Number of Mid Air Collisions identified: 32
Evasive Action Documented: 17
TCAS alarms: 5
Military Involved SAFECOMS: 26 (Note – this figure has doubled from last year)

NATIONAL SAFECOM TOTALS:

OAS: 15	Region 4: 14	Region 9: 3
Region 1: 1	Region 5: 19	Region 10: 1
Region 2: 22	Region 6: 20	States: 14
Region 3: 32	Region 8: 21	

Pacific Northwest SAFECOMS:

Total Airspace Related: 24 (26 including OAS)
Near Mid Air Collision: 1
TFR Intrusions: 11 (13 including OAS)
DOD Involvement: 2
Evasive Action Taken: 1
Communication Issues identified: 7

DOD INVOLVED SAFECOMS: Airspace SAFECOMS involving DOD rose from 10 to 26 this year. I contacted Military Representatives from all branches and sent them a detailed breakdown of all SAFECOMS highlighting safety issues (available upon request). The US Air Force invited me to meet with them to establish monitoring procedures with their Safety Officers. The US Navy was extremely responsive and sent the following to all flight crews nationwide. (Note – there were no more DoD related SAFECOMS after this message was sent out.

Wing Operations Officers,

1. It's Fire Fighting season! Fire fighting aircraft (helo and fixed wing) typically operate at or below 3000' AGL between the airspace around the fire and the airspace around the water source (lake, river, ocean).

2. Remind your pilots of the mid-air collision hazard that exists near fires. Avoid smoke and fire by at least 5NM.

3. Avoid a flight violation! The airspace around a fire is often protected by a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). If you enter a TFR without clearance you may receive a flight violation.

A. IFR Flight. Air Traffic Control will vector nonparticipating IFR traffic around TFRs.

B. VFR Flight. If you are flying VFR you are responsible for avoiding TFRs. Check NOTAMS for TFRs before you fly. Go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace> for a visual display of fire fighting TFRs. Call the nearest Flight Service Station (FSS) on deck at 1-800-992-7433 (or 1-800-WX BRIEF), or airborne on VHF 122.2, or UHF 255.4 to confirm there are no TFRs along your route of flight.

C. MTRs (Military Training Routes). Check for TFRs along your MTRs or stereo routes.

4. Request you forward this info to your squadron operations officers. Recommend squadrons brief at pilot training and post info in flight planning office. US Forest Service Poster: See attached file: gaposter.pdf)

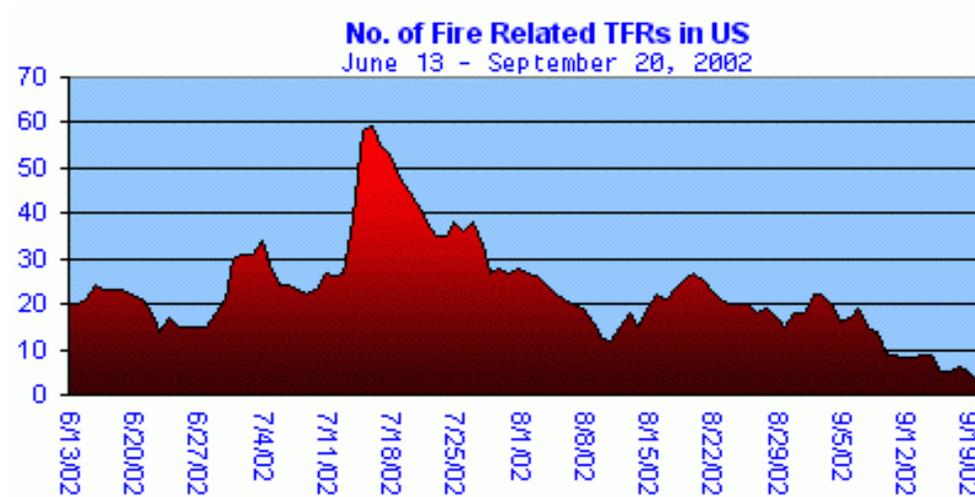
5. FYI. Email below from Ms. Stewart gives more info on DoD TFR violators.

Very respectfully,
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TFR COORDINATION

TFRs were reflective of the size and complexity of our wildfires. Sometimes they were a simple 5 NM radius. Often they were enlarged when the fire increased in size. And then there were legendary TFR's such as Colorado's TFRs, the Rodeo Chediski fire in Arizona and the Oregon fires that challenged both our airspace coordinators, the FAA, DOD and General Aviation in coping with many complex situations.

The number of TFR's reached a peak in July with a total of 59 fire related TFR's on July 15th. Many TFR's were consolidated by the Field airspace Coordinators to reduce their impact on general aviation. **We need to remember that BAER projects do not qualify for a TFR as per the FAA.**



AIRSPACE TOOLS

Many tools are available to assist you with airspace coordination. You will find links and documents at the Interagency Airspace Coordination Website located at www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace. Links to everything!

Graphic TFR information is available through several sources including EAA, AeroPlanner, and the FAA. Several branches of the FAA are working towards a graphic TFR website. We have been assisting them with our technology.

USFS: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/fire/aviation/airspace>

BLM: <http://airspace.blm.gov>

Many other tools (Videos, Posters, etc) are available. IAMS/CAHIS is one of the BEST tools – Be sure to keep it up to date. 2003 will also see the publishing of the long awaiting Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.

Do you have the “top ten” airspace tools to assist you?

- 1) Current Sectionals
- 2) Current AP1/B Book and Charts
- 3) Airspace “Calling Cards”
- 4) Airspace Posters
- 5) Airspace Plotting Rulers
- 6) Current IAMS/CAHIS
- 7) KING Airspace Video
- 8) Current TFR Request and Temp Tower Request Forms
- 9) Aeronautical Chart Users Guide
- 10) Airspace Coordination Guide

A New TFR Form has been approved by the FAA’s US NOTAM office and it is in the 2003 National Mobilization Guide. Here is what is different on the form:

- 1) Using the exact sentence on the form, the FAA will now include the fire/complex name in the TFR NOTAM. The fire names inclusion has been one of the most requested item this fire season.
- 2) At the FAA’s request, we have retooled the location boxes to include bearing/distance AND lat/long information for polygon TFRs. The FAA includes both bearing/distance and lat/long information in the TFR NOTAM.
- 3) Lat/Long issue: The US NOTAM office will issue the TFR as Degree’s, Minutes and Seconds. They will not convert if you give it to them in a different format.

GPS OUTAGES:

Notams are now available for GPS Outages at www.navcen.uscg.gov/gpsnotices. You can also subscribe to receive outage notices. The US Coast Guard is planning a NOTAM application with the US NOTAM office.

BIRD STRIKES

Every year we have several bird strikes or wild life strikes noted on SAFECOMS. This information is trended by both the FAA and DOD. “Hot spots” are mapped on the BASH (Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard) website at <http://safety.kirtland.af.mil/AFSC/Bash/home.html>. The BASH team is one of the oldest organizations committed to reducing wildlife related hazards to aircraft.

The Airport Wildlife Hazard Mitigation website (Part of the Williams J. Hughes FAA Technical Center) offers statistics, trends and on-line strike reporting. Pilots should fill out FAA form 5200-7 when they have experienced a wildlife strike. This information is available at <http://wildlife.pr.erau.edu/index.html>.

FTA TRAFFIC AREA: Another advancement last year is the FTA Traffic Area. It clarifies policies and procedures in and around the Fire Traffic Area which contribute to aviation safety standards

FIELD AIRSPACE COORDINATOR ASSIGNMENTS

2002 was a defining year for airspace coordination. We have had great success with our program. Our Field airspace coordinators consist of current government employees (or "AD" hires who travel to fire assignments and assist with airspace coordination in service to the FAA, DoD, Dispatch organization, Coordination Centers, Incident Management Teams and Area Command.

Last summer, 24 airspace coordinators filled 55 assignments from May to September.

As part of their assignment, the Field Airspace Coordinator performed an outreach program to all neighboring airports and FBO's. Posters, and cards were distributed with the Interagency Airspace URL. In addition, several airspace coordinators were assigned to outreach at local fly-ins. Pilots were extremely interested in receiving information about TFR's especially graphical depictions. Highlight of the season – Coordination with Air Force One!!!

In addition, we outreached at a booth at the Oregon Air Fair and taught an airspace forum. Three Airspace Coordinators received Air Awards for their outstanding accomplishment this past summer. Here is an excerpt from two airspace coordinators who led our program in Washington and Oregon:

“Outreach was conducted between 7/14/01 and 8/18/02. During this period fifty airports in Oregon and Washington were visited, contacts were made with approximately 93 schools, aviation businesses, aviation organizations, and aviation related government offices; 5 university/college associated flight schools, 4 pilot associations: 80 flight schools and aviation related businesses). In excess of 900 pilots were individually contacted during these visits and during four fly-ins. Pilots and flight instructors contacted during this outreach were universally enthusiastic about easily accessible, web based, graphically depicted TFRs displayed on sectionals. Several flight school CFIs indicated they intended to use materials provided in upcoming lessons with students. In addition, CFI's at several flight schools said they intended to use materials provided for ongoing continuing education for pilots.”

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Coordination and cooperation is the key to preventing mid air collisions. Times and priorities are changing yet we still need a safe airspace to work in. We are grateful for your cooperation and consideration when we are working to save our nation's resources. This cooperation comes from a common desire to be safe and effective in a high risk environment.

Our goal is to prevent a mid air collision through a concerted effort of our agency leaders, FAA, DoD, our aviation community, our dispatch coordinators and most importantly, those who fly in the National Airspace System. Remember that one out of five intrusions became Near Mid Air Collisions. One out of Three Near Mid Air Collisions resulted in evasive action taken!