

Airspace Coordination 2003

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Risk Management and Airspace Coordination

Preparation for fire season and airspace coordination begins as soon as fire season ends.

End of season meetings, "hot fire analysis", and "lessons learned" documents are prepared and shared. Airspace issues are trended from SAFECOMS (Incident Reports).

Training sessions are planned and taught. Meetings include Airspace Airspace and Range Council meetings, Dispatcher Workshops, Aviation Awareness meetings and outreach programs.

As fire season begins in the south, education and awareness picks up nationwide. A new position was developed as a Technical Specialist (Field Airspace Coordinator) to assist Incident Management Teams, Coordination Centers and the national Airspace Program Manager with field support.

Wildland Fires of 2002 Summary

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. New records were set in terms of acres burned, suppression costs and impact to people and communities

Firefighters were successful in suppressing 99% of all fires during initial attack. Only about 610 fires escaped to become large fires.

It was a tragic fire season with the loss of 21 people and several aircraft accidents. Aircraft accidents led to the grounding of some large air tankers.

45-50% of the country reported moderate to extreme drought conditions early in the season. Nearly 50% of the nations landmass continues to be in a moderate to extreme state of drought.

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.

National level of preparedness rose to the highest level possible five weeks earlier than before and set a record breaking level for 62 days.

By early July, 30,000 firefighters and support personnel were mobilized, several hundred aircraft and over 2100 engines, bulldozers and tenders. Military resources were requested including MAFF's units and 600 US Army troops in Oregon on the Monument fire. International assistance came from Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Largely due to widespread lightning strikes, wildfires in Oregon and Washington burned more than a million acres. 375 fires were a result from a three day series of 15,000 lightning strikes in early July. In SW Oregon alone, Federal agencies had 246 fires of which 4 became large fires. The Biscuit fire in SW Oregon and California threatened more than 17,000 people while it burned a half million acres and is believed to be the largest fire in Oregon in more than a century.

SAFECOMS

SAFECOMS is our method of tracking incidents involving TFR intrusions and Near Mid Air Collisions. Two websites are available to monitor airspace SAFECOMS and DoD involvement:

DOI: www.oas.gov (click on SAFECOMS)

USFS: www.aviation.fs.fed.us

An analysis of both USFS and DOI 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)



Location of Airspace SAFECOMS

OAS: 15

Region 1: 1

Region 2: 22

Region 3: 32

Region 4: 14

Region 5: 19

Region 6: 20

Region 8: 21

Region 9: 3

Region 10: 1

States: 14

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 through Mr. Pease has 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 contacting the US Navy and Mr. Pease's office).

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)

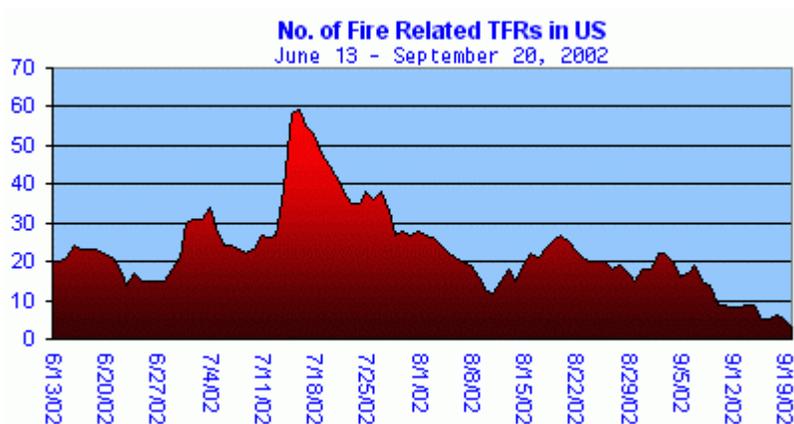
5. FYI. Email below from Ms. Stewart gives more info on DoD TFR violators.

Very respectfully,
LCDR Frank Bugelli, U.S. Navy
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(Western-Pacific, NW Mountain, AK Regions)
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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 were grateful for the outstanding support we received from the many DoD units in cooperating with assisting with our program. Highlights include coordination with the US Air Force Academy in Colorado, and all other units in Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Washington and Oregon.



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 (Aero Planner) <http://www.airspace.blm.gov>

FIELD AIRSPACE COORDINATOR ASSIGNMENTS

This has been a huge year for airspace coordination. We have had great success with our program. Our Field airspace coordinators consist of current government employees (or "AD" contractors – see me if you are interested!) 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.”

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

New MOU with FAA for Temporary Tower Service

Presentation at the GPS International Conference – Notams for GPS Outages

NEW TFR Form – Coordinated with the US NOTAM Office

Will add the fire name into the NOTAM

Standardized Lat/Long issue seems resolved

FTA Traffic Area - clarified Fire Traffic Area policies which contribute to safety standards on fire

Updated information on the Interagency Airspace Website

Coming soon – Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide, 2003 Final Version

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!

QUESTIONS