

Guidance regarding flight operations in the vicinity of volcanic ash

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Revision history

Version 1

10 February 2011

Original issue in the form of a single document, bringing together guidance previously issued as AIRCOMs, ATSINs, FODCOMs and NOTALs. The opportunity has been taken to make some minor updates to the text.

Version 2

26 May 2011

The document has been updated to include information on the underflight of Volcanic Ash and to provide more details about what information should be included in a Safety Risk Assessment.

Version 3

01 October 2014

At the International Volcanic Ash Task Force (Meeting 4 13-15 June 2012) a recommendation (4/16) was agreed that “That States should not declare a danger or restricted area in respect of volcanic ash, except over and in proximity to an erupting volcano.” As a consequence this version removes all references to Temporary Danger Areas (TDA), replacing them with the term high contamination areas.

In this version an aligned policy has been provided with regards the application of a buffer zone to the top and bottom of the ash layer.

Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
ANO	Air Navigation Order
ANSP	Air Navigation Service Provider
AOC	Air Operator's Certificate
ASR	Air Safety Report
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ATCO	Air Traffic Control Officer
ATS	Air Traffic Service(s) (Note: ATS encompass the provision of ATC and FIS.)
CAT	Commercial Air Transport
EASA	European Aviation Safety Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FIR	Flight Information Region
FIS	Flight Information Service
FISO	Flight Information Service Officer
FL	Flight Level
HEMS	Helicopter Emergency Medical Services
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IMC	Instrument Meteorological Conditions
MOR	Mandatory Occurrence Report
MSA	Minimum Safe Altitude
NOTAM	Notice to Airmen
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
PT	Public Transport
RA	Resolution Advisory
RFFS	Rescue and Fire-Fighting Services
SAR	Search And Rescue
SRA	Safety Risk Assessment
SVFR	Special Visual Flight Rules
TCAS	Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System

Abbreviation	Meaning
TRA	Temporary Reserved Area
TRUCE	Training in Unusual Circumstances and Emergencies
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VAA	Volcanic Ash Advisory
VAAC	Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre
VMC	Visual Meteorological Conditions

Guidance regarding flight operations in the vicinity of volcanic ash

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

- 1.1.1. This guidance brings together guidance previously issued as AIRCOMs, ATSINs, FODCOMs and NOTALs. It aims to provide the essential guidance regarding flight in or near volcanic ash for pilots, aircraft owners, Air Traffic Service (ATS) staff, aerodrome operators and maintenance engineers.
- 1.1.2. The guidance contains information and advice that may be issued by other States in the form of an Aeronautical Information Circular entitled “The approach to management of volcanic ash events.”

1.2. Amendments

- 1.2.1. Marginal lines are used to indicate changes from the previous version, and the changes at each version are listed in the Revision History.

1.3. General Points Regarding Volcanic Ash

- 1.3.1. It is emphasised that the responsibility for the risk assessment and management, and for the safe operation of the aircraft, rests firmly with the operator of the aircraft. Operation through or within any area where volcanic ash is forecast is at the discretion of the operator and subject to the regulation of the operator by the State of Registry and the State of the Operator and taking into account any restrictions placed by the state in whose airspace the contamination is forecast.
- 1.3.2. The information provided here,¹ whilst not exhaustive, is intended to facilitate as much flight as is safely possible in airspace in which an encounter with an ash cloud is a hazard, especially where those flights (and machines typically used for those flights) are used to provide essential services to communities.
- 1.3.3. Volcanic ash may extend for several hundred miles and may not be visible to the naked eye.
- 1.3.4. It should be recognised that the ash cloud can be the cause of a common failure mode (e.g. it would affect all engines on one aircraft) - that is why, for example, a

¹ Other States might provide similar information on the approach to the management of volcanic ash events via an AIC.