NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Air Traffic Organization Policy

N JO 7110.729

Effective Date:
December 15, 2016

Cancellation Date:
April 27, 2017

SUBJ: Standard Operating Procedures for Aircraft Deviating for Weather Near Active Special Activity Airspace (SAA)

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice creates Standard Operating Procedure(s) (SOP) for air traffic facilities when handling weather related deviations into Special Activity Airspace (SAA). The procedures in this notice are approved guidance scheduled for publication as Appendix B, FAA JO 7110.65W Air Traffic Control.

2. Audience. This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support, and System Operations; and all associated air traffic control facilities.

3. Where Can I Find This Notice? This notice is available on the MyFAA employee Web site at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/ and on the air traffic publications Web site at http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/.

4. Cancellation. This notice will cancel upon publication of FAA JO 7110.65W CHG3, Air Traffic Control, effective April 27, 2017.

5. Explanation of Policy Change. This notice contains procedures that must be applied when weather related deviations occur near an active or scheduled SAA.

6. Procedures/Responsibilities/Action. Amend FAA JO 7110.65W as follows:

Appendix B. Standard Operating Procedures for Aircraft Deviating for Weather near Active Special Activity Airspace (SAA)

The procedures listed below must be applied and contained in a facility SOP when aircraft deviate into and/or near an active or scheduled SAA:

1. PURPOSE

This appendix prescribes the method and step−by−step process for handling aircraft deviations for weather near active Special Activity Airspace (SAA). The procedures are intended to work in parallel to the preventive procedures outlined in FAA JO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration, Para 17-2-4 a.9, which must be applied when weather is scheduled to impact an active or scheduled SAA.

2. DISCUSSION

a. In all operational facilities, the increase in traffic density and the need for the expeditious movement of traffic without compromising safety have emphasized the importance of handling aircraft deviations for weather in the vicinity of active SAA.

b. The methods and practices used for handling aircraft requesting or initiating deviations off of their filed route due to weather require time critical responses to the request or in response to observed course deviations. Major issues can occur whenever there is a heavy reliance upon reactive control actions when not performed according to this SOP and the procedures outlined in FAA JO 7210.3.

c. Course deviations in areas near active SAA's increase the workload for specialists at the time of their request or observation. The intent of this SOP is to make the handling of the requested deviation or to correct the observed course deviation take place smoothly and to ensure a safe operation with a minimum amount of workload.

3. TERMS

The following terms are important for a complete understanding of this SOP:

a. Status Information Area (SIA). Manual or automatic displays of the current status of position related equipment and operational conditions or procedures.

b. Special Activity Airspace (SAA). Airspace of defined dimensions as an Alert Area, Controlled Firing Area, Military Operations Area (MOA), Prohibited Area, Restricted Area or Warning Area.

c. Deviations. A departure from a current clearance, such as an off course maneuvers to avoid weather or turbulence.

d. Using Agency. The using agency is the military unit or other organization whose activity established the requirement for the SAA. The using agency is responsible for ensuring that:

1. The airspace is used only for its designated purpose.

2. Proper scheduling procedures are established and utilized.

3. The controlling agency is kept informed of changes in scheduled activity, to include the completion of activities for the day.

4. A point of contact is made available to enable the controlling agency to verify schedules, and coordinate access for emergencies, weather diversions, etc.

5. An ATC facility may be designated as the using agency for joint−use areas when that facility has been granted priority for use of the airspace in a joint−use letter of procedure or letter of agreement.

4. PRECAUTIONS

a. Unless clearance of nonparticipating aircraft in/through/adjacent to an active SAA is provided for in a Letter of Agreement or Letter of Procedure, any clearance issued to a nonparticipating aircraft must ensure separation from that SAA by the appropriate minima specified in the FAA JO 7110.65 paragraph 9-3-2.

b. The specialist receiving a request for a route deviation in the vicinity of an active SAA cannot issue a clearance into the active SAA airspace, unless the provisions of the 7110.65 paragraph 9-3-4 are applied. The FAA has no jurisdictional authority over the use of non-joint use prohibited/restricted/warning area airspace; therefore, clearance cannot be issued for flights therein without appropriate approval.

c. If the specialist is able to coordinate approval for entry into the SAA from the using agency, a clearance to the aircraft complying with the provisions coordinated with the using agency can be issued; the specialist must notify the FLM/CIC of this situation and of subsequent requests or deviations from other aircraft in the same area.

d. Use of Code 7700 for aircraft deviations into active SAA is not encouraged, particularly in situations involving multiple aircraft. Positive identification of aircraft may be lost if an aircraft deviates from flight plan track, particularly in the event of a momentary loss of radar or other interruption in tracking.

5. RESPONSIBILITY:

If a deviation occurs that causes an aircraft to enter SAA the air traffic team must follow the procedures outlined below:

a. Attempt the following:

1. Handoff the aircraft to the Using Agency and transfer communications; or

2. Point Out the aircraft to the Using Agency. The controller must:

(a) Continue to provide safety alerts and traffic advisories, as appropriate, to the affected aircraft.

(b) Continue to coordinate with the Using Agency until the situation is resolved.

(c) Assist the aircraft in exiting the SAA.

3. If the handoff or point out is unsuccessful, the controller must:

(a) If able, advise the Using Agency of the pilot’s actions.

(b) Provide safety alerts and traffic advisories, as appropriate.

(c) Assist the aircraft in exiting the SAA as quickly as the weather allows.

(d) Continue to coordinate with the Using Agency until the situation is resolved.

4. If no approval to enter the SAA is given by the using agency:

(a) The specialist must advise the aircraft requesting the course deviation, or deviating toward the SAA, the status of the SAA, and that no clearance can be issued permitting entry into the airspace or;

(b) If an alternative course, which remains clear of the active SAA, is available, offer it to the pilot of the aircraft in question.

5. If the pilot of the nonparticipating aircraft exercises their discretion to deviate from that clearance which ensures separation from an active SAA, and the track of the aircraft will not maintain the required minima from an active SAA, controllers must ascertain if the pilot is exercising emergency authority:

(a) If so, provide assistance and obtain information as provided in the 7110.65 Chapter 10, Emergencies.

(b) If not, provide appropriate pilot deviation notification as specified in the 7110.65 paragraph 2-1-26, Pilot Deviation Notification.

7. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support Services, and System Operations Services; the Office of ATO Safety and Technical Training; Flight Standards Service; the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service; the William J. Hughes Technical Center; and the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

8. Background. This notice contains the procedures listed in the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP) Corrective Action Request (CAR) 2010-040, Special Use Airspace (SUA) and Weather Deviations.

9. Safety Management System. A SRM Panel was convened on January 11, 2012 to evaluate the changes to the NAS contained in CAR 2010-040. A portion of the evaluation involved the TMU requirements for planning telecons. The panel issued a Safety Risk Management Decision Memorandum (SRMDM) for Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP) Corrective Action Request (CAR) 2010-040, Special Use Airspace (SUA) and Weather Deviations. The SRMDM was accepted on February 29, 2012.

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11-10-2016
Date Signed