



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# Advisory Circular

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**Subject: EVENT PLANNING GUIDE**

**Date: 7/24/00**

**AC 00-61**

**Initiated By: AFS-800**

**Change:**

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**1. PURPOSE.** This advisory circular (AC) describes acceptable methods for organizing the aviation community for all events, such as major sports events (auto racing, golf, etc.) It is not limited to sporting events, but can be used whenever there is a large amount of aviation activity on an infrequent basis and open gatherings of people. The goal of this AC is to enhance air and ground safety. This AC does not include events that require Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Form 7711-1, Application for Certificate of Waiver or Authorization.

**2. RELATED CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS.** The following Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts provide additional information to the organizers for the events:

- a. Part 91** - General Operating and Flight Rules.
- b. Part 101** - Moored Balloons, Kites, Unmanned Rockets and Unmanned Free Balloons.
- c. Part 103** - Ultralight Vehicles.
- d. Part 105** - Parachute Jumping.

**3. RELATED READING MATERIAL.** Users of this AC should refer to current editions of the following: AC 91-45, Waivers: Aviation Events; AC 91-32, Safety In and Around Helicopters; and AC 150/5390-2, Heliport Design.

**4. BACKGROUND.** The FAA realized that there are certain events that attract large numbers of aircraft to one location that do not require a waiver/authorization. Therefore, we perceived a need for a generic aviation plan to provide the safest environment possible. Safety is the driving force behind the development process.

**a.** This AC was developed with the auto racing industry as a partnership effort to improve aviation safety. It further assists the FAA and organizers/sponsors to fulfill their responsibility to the spectators and their personal safety interests. Through this partnership, FAA and industry have developed a plan that will enhance safety and not impede the operations, commerce, or the events.

**b.** The auto racing industry brought to the partnership many varied experiences. They were able to analyze real situations and provide plausible solutions. The industry provided an excellent reference base

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from which to build a user friendly program. It is the intent of FAA not to establish new regulations, but to accommodate under the existing structure.

**5. GENERAL.** An event can have degrees of success, but the most undesirable outcome is one that ends in tragedy. An event successful to any degree calls for great detail in planning. Notify your local FSDO and ATC people of your intent as soon as possible. Their resources and experience will serve you well.

**6. PROCESS.** The processes for the event can be divided into four phases: Planning, Implementation, Review, and Re-engineering. Each phase is important and requires the organizers to tailor them for their event, as each event is different. Each phase will be further defined below. Keep in mind that not all will pertain to your event.

**a. Planning.** This phase begins in conjunction with your decision to hold an event. Decide the requirements for aviation support and anticipate extra activity. The FAA strongly encourages some form of official notification that an event may require FAA support. This can usually be accomplished with a letter to the servicing FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and/or Air Traffic Control (ATC) office manager. It is better to overestimate than to be caught by surprise, especially the first time. After the first event, your ability to plan succeeding events improves.

(1) Make arrangements with local emergency services (fire, medical, etc.), law enforcement agencies, and local transit or transportation authorities. It is important for each of these organizations to be in on the early planning stages. Each will bring unique experience and resources to assist with your event. Plan for emergencies on and off the event site to include multiple casualties.

(2) Invite local airport manager(s) to the planning, as they will have direct knowledge of your area's aviation facilities, fixed base operators (FBO's), and their abilities. The airport(s) will need to develop and implement a ground safety program to park aircraft and facilitate passengers walking on the ramp area. Be sure to include your risk manager and your liability insurance representative. The risk manager can assist you with compliance and the insurance representative will advise you what can be done within the terms of your coverage. Remember, it is in their interest to protect you.

(3) Decide if there is a necessity to contract out certain functions, for example, heliport operations, aircraft refuelers, and transportation (buses, etc.) If there is a necessity, be prepared early on to bring the contractor into the planning. Also, consider volunteer groups such as the Civil Air Patrol, Eagle Scouts, and the Explorers. They can assist in security, ground handling, safety escorts on the flight line, etc.

(4) Plan for the event to include the facilitation of the prior to, during, and afterward activities. Each has differing requirements that require consideration. Prior to the event, plan for a mass migration of aircraft to one, maybe two, airport(s). During the event, plan for helicopters, banner towing aircraft, airships, and balloons over and in the vicinity of the event site. After the event prepare for the mass exodus from the event site and the airports.

(5) Implementing your plan will require you or your representative to be available throughout the process. Consider a network of wireless phones or two-way radios to accomplish this.

(6) The importance of indepth planning cannot be overemphasized. Your planning efforts will be rewarded with spectators safely enjoying your event.

**b. Implementation.** This phase begins when you put your plans into action. It may begin days or even months prior to the event. An important aspect of implementing your plan is to be flexible. Even the best laid plans must be modified at some point.

(1) Empower your key people to make minor on the spot changes that will increase efficiency and not compromise safety. When changes develop ensure they are communicated to you and your staff. Ensure that all key people keep a list of problems that were encountered.

(2) Implementation is the stage where the FSDO personnel can assist you with their presence. (Because many events are on private property, ensure the land owner gives permission, and if necessary, obtain credentials for FAA personnel to operate on site.) Experience has shown that the FAA presence will significantly reduce the chances of blatant disregard for aviation safety.

**c. Review.** This phase is very important to you as an organizer of a re-occurring event. Also, your “Lessons Learned” will benefit others who follow with similar types of events.

(1) The key for review is to be open to criticism. Your key personnel should feel compelled to give honest indepth feedback. It is a good idea to solicit comments from those outside the planning cell, such as pilots, busdrivers, and spectators. You can do this with a survey.

(2) While positive notes are likely to be more brief, they also are important. If you are doing something well, you do not want to compromise it needlessly while correcting a problem.

(3) The comments should be documented. As a group, brainstorm possible solutions. Documentation will increase your potential for success in future events and leads directly to the next phase.

**d. Re-engineering.**

(1) This phase will impact all future events. By evaluating the event plans and making the best changes from the review, you can begin developing the plans for the next event. This should not be delayed; completion of this phase while it is still relatively fresh on the minds of you and your key people is crucial to system enhancement.

(2) This phase should lead into the planning phase for your next event. Approach the next planning phase with the knowledge of past events, but do not be complacent. Each event has the potential for a mishap. As word about your successful event gets around, it will continue to grow as long as the safety of your spectators and aviation participants is the first, last, and always consideration.

/s/ Ava L. Mims for  
L. Nicholas Lacey  
Director, Flight Standards Service

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## APPENDIX 1. CHECKLIST FOR MAJOR EVENTS

This checklist is a guide for event sponsors to assist in the planning of major public events. It is not all inclusive and should be modified/augmented as necessary for the event. If there is a question as to whether a performance requires a waiver of FAA regulations, consult the current edition of AC 91-45, Waivers: Aviation Events.

### 1. FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION FSDO/ATC COORDINATION.

A. GENERAL PLANNING COORDINATION. The Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and/or Air Traffic Control (ATC) have people that can assist you. Contact them early.

B. TEMPORARY TOWER. Federal Aviation Administration temporary towers are a possibility to simplify and control the airspace and airport areas. You may use a military (if available) or civilian tower - first, contact the FAA regional ATC people and let them assist you.

C. MASS MIGRATION AND EXODUS OF AIRCRAFT AT LOCAL AIRPORTS. These airports may or may not have an operating control tower. Check with airport management for problems with navigational aids, ramps, parking spaces, and types of fuel available. Confer with the airport personnel on traffic patterns, routes, ground transportation, and other logistical needs.

#### D. AIR COORDINATOR (SPONSOR or CONTRACTOR).

(1) The Air Coordinator should operate in the interest of the owner/sponsor and be unbiased toward the aircraft operators and their operations.

(2) The Air Coordinator should have knowledge of: the event and rotary and fixed-wing aircraft operations.

(3) The Air Coordinator should be the person in charge of those ground movements not under ATC control during operations.

(4) The Air Coordinator should contact the flight service station (FSS) for issuing and updating (via notices to airmen) any information applicable to participating and nonparticipating airmen.

(5) The Air Coordinator will be the point of contact for the FAA.

### 2. HELIPORT.

A. LOCATION. The following should be considered in designating a location:

(1) Area large enough to safely accommodate the projected traffic (AC 150/5390-2, Heliport Design (current edition));

(2) Area that minimizes the risk to the public (spectators, housing, etc.). Consider approach and departure paths (the helicopters are typically single-engine aircraft in a power demand/change situation, which increases the risk for a power failure);

(3) Area that is secured to protect the public; fencing can facilitate separation and loading of VIP's/passengers; and

**NOTE: Fencing should not be high enough to pose a hazard to the aircraft.**

(4) Note and mark on maps/schematics, all hazards to flight (wires, towers). If possible, physically mark the wires.

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## APPENDIX 1. CHECKLIST FOR MAJOR EVENTS (Continued)

### B. OPERATIONS.

- (1) Develop procedures that do not conflict with arrival and departure air traffic.
- (2) Assemble and disseminate heliport operations, routes (appendix 2, figure 1), company insurance documentation, etc., to the known or expected operators.
- (3) If feasible, establish a ground advisory service to facilitate a more orderly operation.

### C. GAINING PARTICIPATION.

- (1) Land owner's permission--as property owners have the authority to require people to comply with their rules, on their property.
- (2) The FAA cannot regulate property: This is a law enforcement issue.
- (3) Use the local FSDO and authorize them to have access to the property, and, if necessary, obtain credentials for them. Usually, just the presence of the FAA motivates cooperation.

## 3. BANNER TOWING.

**NOTE: Banner towing operations require a waiver from 14 CFR section 91.311. However, the coordination of banner towers with other aviation operations should be included in the event planning. Banner towers should reference the current edition of AC 91-45, Waivers: Aviation Events, for information on how to apply for a banner towing waiver.**

### A. COMMUNICATIONS.

- (1) Air to Air--priority.
- (2) Air to Ground--nice to have for multiple aircraft.
- (3) Coordinate with ATC or Federal Communications Commission for frequencies.

### B. TRAFFIC FLOW. Identify and depict patterns for the pilots concerned.

C. AIRWORTHINESS INSPECTIONS. All aircraft conducting banner towing operations should, at some point prior to the event, undergo an airworthiness safety inspection; this is in the interest of public safety.

D. SPECIAL PROVISIONS. The FSDO can attach these to any authorization as needed. They can further define what is and is not acceptable.

## 4. BALLOONS.

A. COMMUNICATIONS. If balloons are not tethered (which is preferred), consider requiring radio communications prior to launch and during flight until clear of the area or landing.

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**APPENDIX 1. CHECKLIST FOR MAJOR EVENTS (Continued)****B. COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE 14 OF THE CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (14 CFR).**

(1) Balloons, as well as any other aircraft over a congested area, are required to comply with 14 CFR. Taking off, low overflight of the event area, and landing on the opposite side while not attaining 1,000 feet is considered noncompliant with 14 CFR part 91, section 91.119(b). This type of flight poses a hazard to those aircraft over the event and to the spectators (appendix 2, figure 2).

(2) If the balloons are tethered at a low altitude, it maximizes airspace and allows for constant visibility to the spectators. The key here is to work with the balloon pilots prior to operations and negotiate their tethering points.

**5. TEMPORARY AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER (ATCT).**

A. A temporary ATCT offers the ability to control ingress and egress at a particular site, ensuring that separation between aircraft is applied and maximizing safety for the users and spectators. The event sponsor may elect to use either FAA or military ATC personnel. If a temporary ATCT is deemed necessary, the event sponsor should contact the nearest servicing ATC facility for assistance.

B. If a temporary ATCT is deemed essential, the following additional requirements need to be considered:

- (1) Airport Requirements.
  - (a) Aircraft parking.
  - (b) Fixed Base Operations.
  - (c) Determine Airport Saturation Point.
- (2) Temporary ATCT Facility Requirements.
  - (a) Location.
  - (b) Hours of operation.
  - (c) Equipment requirements.
  - (d) Frequency requirements.
- (3) Personnel Requirements.
  - (a) Determine personnel required.
  - (b) Determine expenses (lodging, travel, etc.).
- (4) Procedural Requirements.
  - (a) Establish criteria for VFR aircraft.
  - (b) Establish criteria for IFR aircraft.
  - (c) Establish arrival and departure procedures.
  - (d) Establish reservation program.

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**APPENDIX 1. CHECKLIST FOR MAJOR EVENTS (Continued)**

**6. SAFETY BRIEFING.**

**A. MASS SAFETY BRIEF.**

(1) Conduct a safety briefing to include all aerial and ground operations. All participants should attend. It should be conducted with the sponsor risk management team, ATC, Air Coordinator, and the FAA safety program manager.

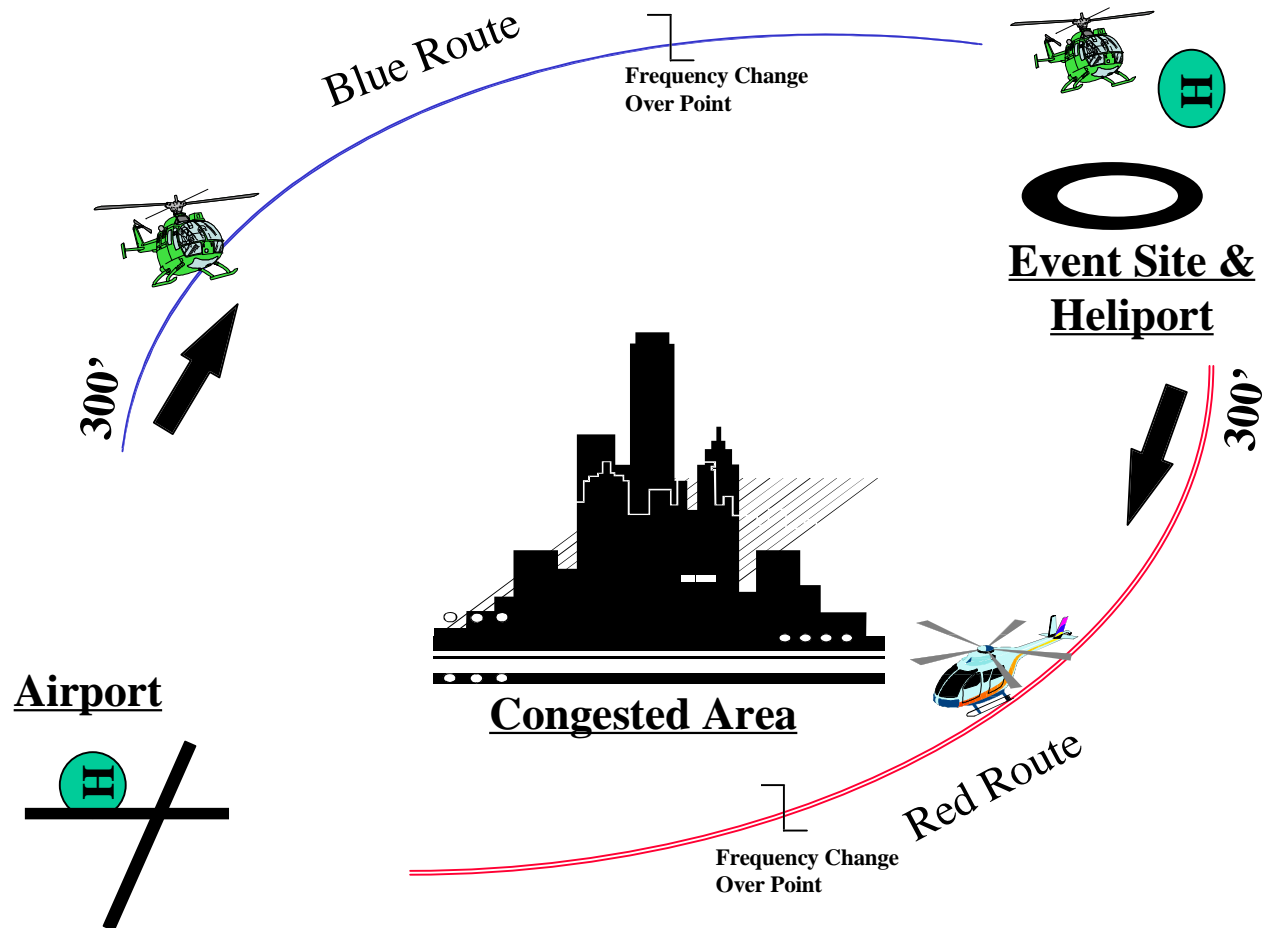
(2) Safety briefings should include weather/night considerations and alternative plans.

**B. FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION SAFETY PROGRAM MANAGER.** If qualifying, give credit for safety briefing attendance toward the WINGS Program. Also, provide assistance to the risk management team as needed.

**7. EVENT DEBRIEFING.** An Event Debriefing is very important to ensure and improve safety and efficiency at the next event for that location. Create a "Lessons Learned" section in your Continuity File. This will improve planning dynamics and prevent making the same mistake twice. Each key person should have a list of problems encountered. It is imperative that problem areas are pointed out and rectified. Stress to all involved that today's problem could lead to tomorrow's accident. Consider ways of including comments from the pilots and other participants.

## APPENDIX 2. FIGURES

FIGURE 1. EXAMPLE OF HELICOPTER FLIGHT ROUTES





**APPENDIX 2. FIGURES (Continued)**

**FIGURE 2. EXAMPLE OF ALTITUDE SEPARATION**

