

AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM
Charting Group
ACF 11-02
RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # 11-02-246

Subject: Coordinating Publication of Special Notices in the A/FD

Background/Discussion:

The FAA publishes many types of Special Notices in the volumes of the U.S. Airport/Facility Directory (A/FD). Special Notices are intended to provide pilots with information which is non-regulatory, informational, or advisory in nature. Notices are published in text or graphical form.

The information is most often produced at the local level by a regional FAA office, a local Air Traffic Control facility, or an individual Airport Authority. As such, the information or the procedure applies only to a particular airport or affects operations in that area.

Examples of Special Notices include local Noise Abatement procedures (San Francisco, CA and Anchorage, AK), Prohibited Airspace Avoidance procedures (Washington DC), local VFR Departure Procedures (Louisville, KY), and Wildfire Operations Avoidance procedures (Western United States).

By their nature, these locally-developed, non-regulatory procedures are not necessarily coordinated on a national level with other branches of the FAA whose areas of responsibility might overlap. For example it is unknown if, or how, or when a noise abatement or VFR procedure is compared to the IFR flight procedures at that airport to determine compatibility.

Also, the original source information used to produce Special Notices is generally not coordinated or disseminated on a national level. For example, responsibility and oversight of the processes for producing regulatory information related to IFR procedures is carefully defined. Likewise, information related to IFR procedures is centrally collected and managed by the National Flight Data Center (NFDC) then subsequently disseminated to the public in the form of the National Flight Data Digest (NFDD). On the contrary, source information related to Special Notices is handled and shared informally, completely outside the FAA's established source handling processes, and without the benefit of any clear or centralized oversight.

At the present time original source for Special Notices finds its way, by various means, to the group within AeroNav Services responsible for publishing the A/FD. Within AeroNav Services the guidelines for creating or revising a Special Notice are not well defined and are subject to individual analysis or interpretation based on circumstances or at request of the originator. Sometimes new or updated information about a Special Notice is shared with commercial chart providers such as Jeppesen, sometimes it is not.

Sometimes the opposite happens. For example, a local ATC unit or Airport Operator may contact Jeppesen directly with a request to publish or revise their local procedure, but they may not be aware of or overlook their need to also coordinate with AeroNav Services.

A major problem is that many local ATC units or Airport Operators who originate these procedures and produce the original source are confused by the lack of a national system and

do not know how or where to submit requests to have their local procedures published outside their local domain, on a national or international level, either by the federal government or by a commercial company such as Jeppesen. It is also unclear which of the organization(s) involved are ultimately responsible for initiating a revision to a Special Notice, such as a change to a charted navaid or fix vs. a change to the original procedure itself.

A result of the lack of an organized system within the FAA for collecting, managing, and distributing source for Special Notices, plus the lack of advance information about which Special Notices will be published by the FAA (new or revised), the potential exists for disconnects between the information provided by the FAA and the information provided by commercial flight information companies. For example, in some cases, the FAA may publish a Noise Abatement or VFR procedure that Jeppesen does not, or vice versa. There have also been cases where the FAA provided Jeppesen with source for a new Special Notice, but source for updates was somehow overlooked. Differences between government and commercial publications are often questioned by pilots, airlines, ATC, and airport operators. The current situation needs attention and improvement.

It should be noted here that Jeppesen does not use the content of the A/FD as source information. This is because the information contained in the A/DF is available only after it's publication and is therefore considered "after the fact". The preference, by far, is to receive and apply original source well in advance of actual effective dates.

Recommendations:

1. The FAA should develop and implement a system that supports the centralized collection, management and public dissemination of original non-regulatory source(s) - developed at the local level - for potential publication in the form of a Special Notice in the A/FD which might then be distributed on a national level.
2. The FAA should develop guidelines for determining when a Special Notice should be published based on anticipated use. For example, consideration for publication should be made in collaboration with the local originating or responsible authority and be based on local circumstances and the potential affect on flight operations and ATC-Pilot communication. Criteria could be based on whether the procedure or the information is:
 - a) ATC Expected or Assigned
 - b) ATC Offered or Optional Use
 - c) Pilot Request or Optional Use, or
 - d) General Information & Awareness Only.
3. In the new system the FAA should share it's determination of when, where and how a Special Notice might be published in the A/FD (graphical or textual, new or revised). This categorization information should be provided to the public along with the latest source necessary to create or update a Special Notice. For example, the FAA could create, maintain and share a list of all Special Notices it publishes in various volumes of the A/FD, and include in that list it's determination of anticipated use as outlined above.
4. When the new system for managing Special Notices has been established and is ready for implementation, the FAA should notify affected organizations, especially local ATC units and Airport Authorities who original such requests, as well as other users of the NAS including commercial organizations involved in the production and distribution of flight information.

5. The new system, based on the availability of shared information, would improve the integrity and currency of the information contained within Special Notices published by the FAA in it's A/FD. It could also be used local Originators, by the FAA, and by commercial providers of flight information to improve the coordination process and in making publication decisions - overall.

Comments: This recommendation affects

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MEETING 11-02: Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, [submitted and briefed the issue](#). Mr. Thompson stated as a result of the lack of an organized system within the FAA for collecting, managing, and distributing source for Special Notices, plus the lack of advance information about which Special Notices will be published by the FAA (new or revised), the potential exists for disconnects between the information provided by the FAA and the information provided by commercial flight information companies.

For example, in some cases, the FAA may publish a Noise Abatement or VFR procedure that Jeppesen does not, or vice versa. There have also been cases where the FAA provided Jeppesen with source for a new Special Notice, but source for updates was somehow overlooked.

In other cases, it has been noticed that information shown on various FAA and Local websites varies from what is published in the A/FD (i.e. Ketchikan, Alaska FSS website indicates Visual Waypoints that differ substantially from what is published in the A/FD. Alaska Airlines has noted the difference and has requested that Jeppesen publish from the FSS website instead of the A/FD due to their close relations with the FSS and Local authorities.)

Differences between government and commercial publications are often questioned by pilots, airlines, ATC, and airport operators.

It was recommended that the FAA establish a conduit for publication of these procedures (such as the NFDD), so that FAA internal charting offices and commercial flight information entities would always receive the same information from a sanctioned source, and that information would be the most accurate and current available.

Mr. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, stated that AeroNav Products agrees with and supports the recommendation and further suggested that the Aeronautical Information Management (AIM) the office within the FAA responsibilities for collection, verification and dissemination of aeronautical information, begin publishing these procedures through one of their standard vehicles.

Mr. George Sempeles, FAA/AJR-22, offered to start providing Special Notices (new or updated) by means of the "add on" pages of the NFDD.

Mr. Thompson replied that doing so would satisfy one of the recommendations (public dissemination). Also, the NFDD represents an “approved source”.

ACTION: Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, to coordinate with Mr. Bob Carlson, FAA/AJV-322, Mr. Chris Criswell, FAA/AJR-22 and Mr. George Sempeles, FAA/AJR-22, on ideas presented in the Recommendation Document.

MEETING 12-01: Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, briefed the issue. In the past, Special Notices source information was received by AeroNav Products (FAA/AJV-3) via internal FAA memo or email from Cartographic Standards, FAA/AJV-22. Recently, the National Flight Data Center (NFDC), FAA/AJV-22, has begun publishing the data in the National Flight Data Digest (NFDD) as “add-on” pages. The information is not entered into the NASR database, but IS now publicly disseminated by the FAA office responsible for Aeronautical Information Management.

Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, expressed his appreciation for the progress the FAA has made in publicly disseminating Special Notices via NFDD and conceded that it was a marked improvement over the old process. However, he has concerns regarding the details of publication – the fact that individual revisions are not flagged as “changed” and that apparently ALL Notices are not being disseminated. (The recent Teterboro, NJ, Dalton Visual Departure was cited as an example.)

Mr. Thompson asked for an offline discussion with Ms. Watson and individuals from the NFDC (FAA/AJW-21) office to discuss possible improvement to the process. There were no NFDC representatives present, but Ms. Watson agreed to meet with Mr. Thompson and engage NFDC in a discussion to help improve the process.

Mr. Thomas Schneider, FAA/AFS-420, inquired as to the process by which Special Notices are initiated and documented. Mr. George Sempeles, Quality Manager for FAA/AJV-32, stated that the Notices are received at the NFDC office from the Service Areas, but that there is not a formally documented process. Mr. Schneider suggested that a process be established and formalized.

Mr. Roy Maxwell, Delta Air Lines, voiced that it would be beneficial to end users if specific changes on the charts and within such publications as the A/FD were highlighted or flagged in some manner. Ms. Watson responded that the charting offices are aware of this and are working toward solutions. She cited the “compare” tool currently available in the digital TPP files which shows clearly what has changed on a terminal procedure. Mr. Bob Carlson, FAA/AJV-322, stated that though “change bars” are used in A/FD back matter, they are not yet utilized within the airport entry section of that publication. He commented that the A/FD is in the process of becoming an automated product and though an estimated 1000 revisions are made to the airport section of every A/FD per cycle, it is possible that some sort of change alert mechanism can be built into the system in the future.

Mr. Rich Boll, NBAA, noted that many of the A/FDs contain flight procedures and inquired as to whether such information is appropriately placed within the Special Notices section of the A/FD. He expressed specific concern about Visual Flight Procedures in the A/FD that could easily get “lost” placed as they are.

Mr. Thompson added that Jeppesen has struggled with the whole issue of Visual Flight Procedures for years and agreed with Mr. Boll that the Notices Section of the A/FD is probably

not the ideal location for them. Mr. Thompson continued, stating that due to the wide variety of Special Notices, some with a direct impact on flight operations and others without, a “scrub” of the section might be worthwhile.

Further discussion ensued regarding the variety of items contained in the Notices section (from VFR Departures to tethered balloons). Several attendees expressed the opinion that flight-critical information can easily be overlooked if imbedded in a section of a publication containing non-critical entries.

Mr. Brad Rush, FAA/AJV-3B, acknowledged the challenge presented and explained that in many ways the A/FD has become a “catch-all” for those items which don’t fit within other existing charting and pilot information publications. He agreed that the matter should be looked into.

Ms. Watson asked whether the Charted Visual Flight Procedures (CVFP) Order 7100.79 could be revised to accommodate some or all of the VFR Procedures currently published in the A/FDs. (CVFPs are published in the Terminal Procedures Publications not the A/FDs.) Mr. Kyle McKee, FAA/AFS-410, stated that the order was currently under revision and he would investigate the possibility of incorporating the procedures under discussion.

STATUS: OPEN

ACTION: Mr. Kyle McKee, FAA/AFS-410, to coordinate with AJV-14 on exploring and expanding scope of FAA Order 7100.79 to include VFR Departures and Arrivals.

ACTION: Mr. Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, to work with NFDC through Ms. Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B on refining the NFDD sourcing process.

ACTION: Mr. Bob Carlson, FAA, AJV-322, to discuss within the A/FD Team a reassessment of the contents and criteria by which items are added to the Notices section.

MEETING 12-02:

Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, provided an update of actions taken since last ACF. Ted commented that at the last ACF the discussion was centered on tracking changes made to the Special Notices source documents.

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, stated that the Aeronautical Information Services Work Group (AISWG) had met and the group discussed the challenges associated with tracking and identifying changes made to the Special Notices pages. The AISWG concluded that though the FAA is not able to highlight every change made to a Special Notice page, brief text will be added to the source to describe generally what has been revised.

Kyle McKee, FAA/AJV-142, commented on the user concern related to Visual Flight Procedures that appear in the AFD. During the last ACF, Kyle was asked to investigate whether VFR Departure and Arrival procedures could be incorporated into FAA Order 7100.79, Charted Visual Flight procedures. Kyle stated that he has been working to expand the language of the Order to include the charting of Visual Departures and

Arrivals. The change would formalize both the procedure themselves and the procedure submission process and may enable the procedures to be included in the TPPs as well as the AFDs.

Valerie inquired as to the timeline for the modifications to the Order and whether there has been any feedback on publication of the VFR Departures and Arrivals in the TPPs. Kyle replied that he is currently working on the generation of a new form that is tailored for Visual Procedures which is being coordinated the with Terminal Service Unit, but was not able to provide any more detail. He will update the group at the next meeting.

Tom Schneider, FAA/AFS-420, asked if there was inclusion of any future RNAV needs regarding the use of waypoints within a Visual Flight Procedure. Kyle replied that work was being done to include waypoints within the Visual Flight Procedure arena.

Ted commented that off-procedure (or “floating”) visual waypoints have proliferated. This has presented challenges for the charting industry, and most particularly the coding industry, as far as what waypoints should be included or excluded in coded databases. Current database and display systems allow pilots the option to turn on and off waypoints, but at present it is impossible to discern which points are of use and which are not. Ted expressed that the parsing of non-procedural waypoints poses a huge problem and would like to see more categorization of these points as far as use.

Jim Arrighi, FAA/AJV-141, stated that ATC was interested in being able to make use of those floating waypoints and concurred with Ted’s comments that because there is no way to categorize the points, they are currently not able to be utilized by ATC.

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-3B, inquired as to whether there was a need to look at the naming convention of floating waypoints as a possible means to addressing part of the problem.

Bob Lamond, NBAA, commented that the issue regarding the databasing and use of floating waypoints was a big issue and one that needs to be addressed.

It was agreed upon by those in attendance that the identification, databasing and use of floating waypoints was an issue that needs to be addressed, but is an issue separate from the original topic of the RD. There was a consensus to agree to close this RD.

Valerie commented that the AFD team is working on a new IACC Specification that will support the Alaska Supplement, Pacific Supplement and the AFDs. The new specification will aid in improving the organization of the Special Notices sections of all these FAA products.

STAUS: CLOSED