Revision 1

Aerodrome User Groups

5 April 2025

General

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Advisory Circulars (ACs) contain information about standards, practices, and procedures that the Director has found to be an **acceptable means of compliance** with the associated rule.

Consideration will be given to other methods of compliance that may be presented to the Director. When new standards, practices, or procedures are found to be acceptable they will be added to the appropriate AC.

Purpose

This AC provides guidance material for aerodrome operators on establishing and managing user groups to assist them in the process, and to support the more effective operation of user groups in cases where this may be necessary.

Related Rules

This AC relates to Civil Aviation Rule Part 139, *Aerodromes Certification, Operation and Use*.

Change Notice

Revision 1 updates the contact details for Aviation Safety Advisors, makes stylistic updates in line with current AC style and adds a Version History.

Version History

History Log

Revision No.	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
AC139-17, Rev 0	20 July 2012	Initial issue
AC139-17, Rev 1	5 April 2025	Updates the contact details for Aviation Safety Advisors Stylistic updates in line with current AC style Adds a Version History.

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Introduction

Aerodrome safety is greatly enhanced when all aerodrome users meet on a regular basis to discuss issues, review changes and propose safety improvements. The number of incidents and aviation-related concerns reported at aerodromes has been proven to reduce when an aerodrome user group is in place. This is a forum for identifying safety issues and developing any limitations and operational conditions on the use of the aerodrome.

CAA strongly supports aerodrome user groups at all aerodromes and endorses recommendations and issues raised as a collective voice for persons involved in operations on the aerodrome and the airspace in its vicinity.

An aerodrome user group is also the best forum to address any safety concerns identified by an aerodrome user, to discuss the impact of any proposed changes to the aerodrome environment or to the type of operations conducted on the aerodrome. It is also a good way to monitor and amend, if necessary, the operational conditions for the aerodrome that are published in the New Zealand Aeronautical Information Publication (AIPNZ).

The purpose of a user group is to facilitate development and co-ordination of procedures for the safe use of an aerodrome and associated airspace. The aim being that the operators will "own" the procedures adapted to suit an area and type of operation. This also fits the philosophy of "participant responsibility".

It is also an important component in the operation of a safety management system for the operation of the aerodrome.

Aviation Safety Advisors can help with the formation and operation of an aviation safety group, if required. Their details are available on the *Contact Us* page on the CAA website:

https://www.aviation.govt.nz/about-us/contact-us/#Aviation-safety-advisors

Another useful resource is this Vector article, available on the CAA website: What makes a great aerodrome culture? | aviation.govt.nz

Why have user groups?

An active user group allows participants to have real influence over what happens at their home aerodrome.

The user group should comprise representatives of all persons or organisations whose activities can impact on the safety, regularity, and efficiency of operations associated with the aerodrome.

These may include:

- scheduled airline operators

- local aeroplane operators

- helicopter operators

- flying schools

- Airways representatives

- microlight clubs

- glider clubs

- parachute organisations

- model aeroplane clubs

- contractors who are employed on a regular basis to perform airfield maintenance such as grass cutting, weed spraying, etc.

- CAA Aviation Safety Advisors and other CAA personnel if required for specific issues.

All of these organisations have their own needs and engage in activities that can impact upon the activities of others. The harmony and safety of the culture is directly connected to the quality of the relationships between users, and between aerodrome management and users.

Running a user group

General

There are already many user groups operating effectively in New Zealand and no two operate in the same way. Each has evolved into an organisation best suited to the environment of the particular aerodrome.

The aerodrome operator is ultimately responsible for the safe operation of the aerodrome and the promulgation of limitations and operational conditions. However, the responsibility for managing these functions is often delegated to an operator on the aerodrome who has more aircraft operational expertise than the aerodrome operator.

Setting up a user group

The aerodrome operator should convene the first meeting and invite all relevant people. If requested, the CAA Aviation Safety Adviser will be able to provide guidance. The purpose of the user group should be explained, and the attendees invited to suggest areas in which the safety and regularity of aircraft operations could be improved.

From these discussions a person needs to be appointed to chair the group, and this may or may not be the aerodrome operator. An action plan should be agreed to correct any issues raised, and the date for the next meeting established.

Frequency

User group meetings should be scheduled at intervals appropriate to the volume and complexity of operations at the aerodrome. Where the volume and complexity is high, meetings should be scheduled for up to six times per year. In the case of an aerodrome with only isolated traffic, twice a year may be sufficient.

Special meetings should also be called following an incident or accident or when a serious issue is raised, or when a new operator or a new type of operation is proposed for the aerodrome. Special meetings should also be called when major works are proposed to the aerodrome that may impact airfield operations.

Agenda

An agenda for each meeting should be produced and circulated to each member of the user group prior to each meeting. This agenda may be standard for each meeting and only amended as and when required.

Items for discussion could include:

- airport operational issues

- proposed amendments to aerodrome layout, or proposed works on aerodromes

- airspace issues

- review of any safety incidents or accidents

- review of published aerodrome data and operational procedures contained in the AIPNZ

- reviewing and co-ordinating feedback on any airspace amendment proposals

- requirement for any traffic rules to accommodate an organisation with special needs, e.g. gliders, helicopter training, model aircraft etc.

- any type of activity commencing on or off the aerodrome that may have an impact on aerodrome operations

- an activity which previously had special procedures developed for it and is no longer operating, and

- issues raised by any member of the group.

Follow up action

Where issues have been raised and follow up action has been proposed to mitigate those issues, the aerodrome operator needs to ensure that any action proposed will not be in breach of Part 139 or any other civil aviation rule, or be inconsistent with the operator's Part 139 exposition.

Where there is concern over the implications of any proposed follow up action, the aerodrome operator should consult with CAA first before carrying out the proposed action.

Minutes

Minutes should be taken at each meeting and retained for future reference. Where decisions have been made or action points agreed to, the minutes need to clearly show the decision made or who is responsible for any follow up action, and be distributed to each member of the user group as soon as practicable following the meeting.

Aeronautical studies

An aeronautical study is a tool used to review aerodrome and airspace processes and procedures to ensure that safety criteria in place are appropriate. User groups can assist in safety reviews or aeronautical studies as they are able to help aerodrome operators when considering changes to the aerodrome environment. AC139-15, *Aeronautical Studies for Aerodrome Operators*, provides information and guidance to help aerodrome operators and other parties to undertake an aeronautical study.