



ICAO

The Third Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Aerodrome Assistance
Working Group (AP-AA/WG/3)

Video Teleconference, 23 to 26 March 2021

Agenda Item 3: Aerodrome Certification and Safety Management System

VIRTUAL APEX IN SAFETY

(Presented by Airports Council International)

SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to advise the Working Group that ACI has launched a new safety review service online based on the existing APEX in Safety Review program because of the COVID-19 pandemic that has effectively shut down international travels since early 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 APEX (Airport Excellence) in Safety is a peer review program that ACI launched in 2012. By the end of 2019, more than 110 airports around the world had “hosted” such safety reviews, i.e. had had voluntary safety assessors from other fellow ACI member airports conduct review of aerodrome safety onsite and make disinterested advice to improve safety.

1.2 Because of the COVID-19 pandemic that broke out in early 2020, international travels have essentially ground to complete halt and no onsite APEX safety review has been possible since then.

1.3 Faced with this unprecedented challenge, ACI started offering virtual (online) safety reviews based on the existing APEX program in July 2020 to circumvent the travel restrictions. The details of this new service are given below:

2. DISCUSSION

What is a Traditional APEX in Safety Review?

2.1 To understand a Virtual APEX in Safety Review, first we need to explain what a “traditional” APEX in Safety Review is.

2.2 A “traditional” APEX review involves a team of typically five to six voluntary safety assessors, themselves usually full-time senior aerodrome safety and operations managers at their own airports, conducting a week-long assessment of safety at the invitation of the host airport based on onsite observation of operations and facilities; face-to-face discussions with the local personnel; and review of documents.

2.3 Operations and facilities inspected include runways, taxiways, aprons, ground lightings, wildlife management, firefighting and rescue. The aerodrome and SMS manuals and their actual implementation are also carefully reviewed.

2.4 At the end of the week, the assessment team gives a presentation of their observations and recommendations to enhance safety to the management of the airport.

2.5 Within a few weeks, a written full report on the review is submitted to the host airport.

2.6 It should be noted that the service is entirely complimentary. The host only needs to pay for the travel and accommodation costs of the safety review team; no consultancy fee is charged.

2.7 A Google map indicating the airports that have hosted APEX in Safety reviews to date is available at the following address:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ssi-VnUKih3m4yHKdq1SAmXgYR15UTt8&ll=-11.247808948519504%2C24.93864847164552&z=4>

2.8 Note that the map also indicates, in different colour codes, the airports that have hosted APEX in Security and Environment reviews.

2.9 It is worth noting AOP/WG/2 held in June 2014 acknowledged that APEX in Safety helped airports comply with ICAO SARPs and States in their oversight of aerodrome safety. Furthermore, **Conclusion APANPIRG/25/9** encourages States to support the ACI APEX in Safety program.

What is a Virtual APEX in Safety Review?

2.10 By contrast a virtual APEX review is conducted entirely online. The team of the host airport, i.e. the airport whose safety is being reviewed, communicate with the team of safety assessors on an online video conference platform.

2.11 Therefore no onsite inspection of facilities such as the runways and taxiways and operations is conducted.

2.12 The review focuses on the completeness of operations and management manuals and implementation of procedures and systems these manuals provide for.

2.13 Contrary to a traditional review that conducts all streams of inspection work simultaneously in the same week, the virtual programme focus entirely on a specific topic at one time for a duration of 2 to 3 or 3 to 5 days.

2.14 Currently ACI is offering the virtual reviews on various topics such as aerodrome manual, SMS, wildlife hazard management.

2.15 Details on the virtual APEX in Safety Review service can be obtained online at: <https://aci.aero/apex/virtual-apex-solution/>.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the launch of a new Virtual APEX in Safety service; and
- b) disseminate this news to States and aerodrome operators who are not present.

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