

International Civil Aviation Organization

ICAO

## WORKING PAPER

Asia and Pacific (APAC)  
Thirteenth Meeting of the Meteorological Services  
Working Group (MET/S WG/13)

Bangkok, Thailand, 29 to 31 March 2023

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**Agenda Item 6: Guidance and education related to the provision of meteorological services****APAC VOLCEX 22/01 FINDING: EXERCISE INDICATOR INCONSISTENCY IN THE  
GUIDANCE**

(Presented by Indonesia)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents a finding from VOLCEX 22/01 regarding the inconsistency of exercise indicators between ICAO Annex 3, Handbook on The International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW) and the Asia/Pacific Regional SIGMET Guide.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. A brief overview of APAC VOLCEX 22/01: hosted by BMKG Indonesia as the Exercise Leader, simulating Sorik-Marapi Volcano, demonstrating the coordination of VA information between Indonesia (Jakarta FIR) and Sri Lanka (Colombo FIR). Messages exchanged during the exercise include VA Advisory, SIGMET, ASHTAM, METAR/SPECI, Special Air Report, etc.

1.2. Given the importance of exercise indicators, i.e., to emphasize that the exchanged messages are intended for the exercise and thereby not interrupting the real operational, it is stated on Annex 3 that the indicator is *“used only when the message issued to indicate that a test or an exercise is taking place. When the word “TEST” or the abbreviation “EXER” is included, the message may contain information that should not be used operationally or will otherwise end immediately after the word “TEST”. [Applicable 7 November 2019]*

1.3. The Asia/Pacific Regional SIGMET Guide is used as a guide to publish and exchange SIGMET information in the Asia Pacific region, while Handbook on the International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW) provides the operational procedures for the dissemination of information on volcanic eruptions and associated volcanic ash clouds in the areas which could affect routes used by international flights, and necessary arrangements prior to a volcanic eruption.

2. DISCUSSION

Differences of exercise indicator in ICAO Annex 3, IAVW Handbook, and APAC SIGMET Guide

2.1. Annex 3 and SIGMET Guide already use the same indicator namely EXER. It is stated in Annex 3, Table A6-1 and Section 3.5.3.3 on the SIGMET Guide.

Table A6-1 (Annex 3)

IF THE SIGMET OR AIRMET MESSAGE IS TO BE CANCELLED, SEE DETAILS AT THE END OF THE TEMPLATE.					
Status indicator (C) <sup>5</sup>	Indicator of test or exercise	TEST or EXER	TEST or EXER	TEST EXER	TEST EXER

Section 3.5.3.3 of the ASIA/PACIFIC REGIONAL SIGMET GUIDE SEVENTH EDITION — OCTOBER 2019 states “This field will only be used if the SIGMET message is intended to be used for Test or Exercise purposes. The omission of this field indicates that the SIGMET is intended for operational decision making. When used, the SIGMET message may either end immediately after the word TEST or abbreviation EXER. Alternatively after the word TEST or abbreviation EXER, depending on the nature of the test and under most exercise circumstances the SIGMET message may contain realistic, although not necessarily valid content (the nature of tests and exercises may require historical data to be used).”

2.2 Unlike the Annex 3 and SIGMET Guide, IAVW Handbook states that the indicator for Volcanic Ash Exercise on section 4.8 should be indicated as “VA TEST or VA EXERCISE”. Section 4.8 of the Handbook on the International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW) - Operational Procedures and Contact List (Doc 9766) states “the MWO concerned should issue a volcanic ash SIGMET highlighting that the SIGMET refers to a test message by including “VA TEST” or “VA EXERCISE” (followed by the name of the exercise, if wished) in element “Phenomenon” of SIGMET message (Annex 3, Table A6-1 refers).

2.3. Due to these differences in the exercise indicators, there was a confusion for the exercise players on which indicator to use during the APAC VOLCEX 22/01.

Exercise indicators used during APAC VOLCEX 22/01

2.4. During APAC VOLCEX 22/01, VA Advisories and SIGMET messages were exchanged using exercise indicator “EXER”, following the guidance from Annex 3 and APAC Regional SIGMET Guide. Meanwhile, the other exercise messages other than VA Advisories and SIGMET (e.g., ASHTAM/NOTAM, METAR/SPECI, special air report, etc.) were exchanged using exercise indicator “APAC VOLCEX 22/01” and ended with indicator “VA EXERCISE VA EXERCISE VA EXERCISE”.

2.5. These differences caused the inconsistency in the use of exercise indicators among different exercise messages. Despite the confusion, these differences did not cause substantial problems to the exercise nor interrupt the real operational.

Proposal on a consistent exercise indicator in the guidance

2.6. Given the importance of indicator in emphasizing the exercise message to the real operational, it is therefore important to have a consistent and fixed guidance regarding the exercise indicator. Moreover, this would be helpful and certain for future volcanic ash exercises in the region.

### **3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- i. Note the information contained in the paper; and
- ii. Request ICAO Secretariat to review the matter explained in this paper.

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