



ICAO

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Eleventh Meeting of the ICAO Asia/Pacific Search and Rescue  
Workgroup (APSAR/WG/11)

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## Agenda Item 5: Asia/Pacific Regional Plan

### AERODROME EMERGENCY PLANS AND SAR RESPONSE IN VICINITY OF AERODROMES

(Presented by Australia)

#### SUMMARY

This paper presents information which may help guide States with ensuring clear SAR coordination arrangements are in place for response to aircraft emergencies in the vicinity of, but outside, aerodrome boundaries including adjacent waterways. This is informed by a recent review of Australia's national emergency response coordination arrangements which identified a need for clearer guidance regarding the integration of Aerodrome Emergency Plans (AEPs) with national SAR plan arrangements.

This paper also invites States to share with this workgroup information about the integration of AEPs and SAR coordination arrangements within their own Search and Rescue Regions (SRRs).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Various ICAO instruments, including the *ICAO Asia/Pacific Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan*, contain standards, recommended practices and guidance for States to provide effective response to aircraft emergencies in proximity to, but outside, aerodrome boundaries including adjacent waterways. A common theme throughout those instruments is that State plans need to ensure clear responsibilities are defined for the cooperation and coordination between emergency response stakeholders, including between AEP stakeholders and Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs).

1.2 A review of Australia's current arrangements identified a gap which has resulted in amendments to the Australian National SAR Manual to provide clearer guidance on the integrated nature of Australia's emergency response arrangements and the roles and coordination responsibilities of local and national emergency response stakeholders.

1.3 This paper provides some insights from Australia's review that may be helpful for other States who may be considering a similar review of their own arrangements.

1.4 The review also revealed there is no clear definition for an aerodrome boundary which creates different interpretations about what distance from an aerodrome is applicable for determination of responsibilities for coordination and rescue capability for such emergencies. These differences in interpretation could result in gaps or overlaps in understanding of responsibilities unless clearly established and integrated arrangements are in place between all relevant stakeholders.

## 2. DISCUSSION

### ICAO Emergency Planning Instruments and Guidance

2.1 Listed below are a variety of ICAO references on this matter.

a) **Annex 12 Search and Rescue**

4.2.5 Recommendation – Search and rescue plans of operation should be integrated with airport emergency plans to provide for rescue services in the vicinity of aerodromes including, for coastal aerodromes, areas of water.

b) **Annex 14 Aerodromes, Volume I**

- i) 9.1 General, Introductory Note (in part) – Aerodrome emergency planning is the process of preparing an aerodrome to cope with an emergency occurring at the aerodrome or in its vicinity ...
- ii) 9.1.2 The aerodrome emergency plan shall provide for the coordination of the actions to be taken in an emergency occurring at an aerodrome or in its vicinity.
- iii) 9.1.4 Recommendation – The plan should provide for cooperation and coordination with the rescue coordination centre, as necessary.
- iv) Attachment A 17. Rescue and firefighting services, 17.1.2 – In drawing up the detailed plan for the conduct of search and rescue operations in accordance with 4.2.1 of Annex 12 — Search and Rescue, the aerodrome management should coordinate its plans with the relevant rescue coordination centres to ensure that the respective limits of their responsibilities for an aircraft accident within the vicinity of an aerodrome are clearly delineated.

c) **ICAO Airport Services Manual (Doc 9137)**

i) Part 1 – Rescue and Firefighting

13.1.2 In producing its detailed plan, the airport or appropriate authority should have regard to the services and facilities already provided by the search and rescue organization in accordance with 4.2.1 of Annex 12 — Search and Rescue, to ensure that the separate responsibilities for an aircraft accident in the vicinity of the airport are clearly delineated. All operations, and any exercises conducted to test operational efficiency, should involve the relevant rescue coordination centre, to ensure the effective mobilization of all resources. Matters dealing with services and facilities necessary to provide practical and economical search and rescue coverage of a given area are described in the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual (Doc 9731), Volume I — Organization and Management.

ii) Part 7 – Airport Emergency Planning

3.12 Rescue Coordination Centre. Rescue co-ordination centres may play a significant role when aircraft accidents occur in the vicinity of an airport but the accident site is not known, or rescue facilities additional to those available at or near the airport are required to be brought into action. Rescue co-ordination centres shall have means of immediate communication with all rescue units within their areas of responsibility, including units providing aircraft, helicopters and special rescue teams. Where appropriate, coastal radio stations capable of alerting and communicating with surface vessels must be used. Assistance from some of these units can be essential in responding to an accident in the vicinity of the airport. It

is therefore suggested that the potential role of the rescue co-ordination centre be specifically highlighted in a separate paragraph in the airport emergency plan document.

**d) IAMSAR Manual (Doc 9731), Volume II**

- i) 8.7.1 Annex 14 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation provides for an Aerodrome Emergency Plan. As recommended in Annex 14, the plan should provide for cooperation and coordination with the rescue coordination centre, as necessary. This Plan is maintained to minimize the number of personal injuries and the extent of property damage resulting from an emergency. These Plans focus on emergency services and resources available to aerodrome and local emergency service organizations. Cooperation and coordination between the aerodrome operators and the RCC should be promoted for the provision of mutual assistance. The plan is to include the ready availability of, and coordination with, appropriate specialist rescue services to be able to respond to emergencies where an aerodrome is located close to water and/or swampy areas or difficult terrain and where a significant portion of approach or departure operations takes place over these areas.
- ii) 8.7.2 Aerodromes should make provisions with local SAR service providers for water rescue and mass casualties near aerodromes, as appropriate. The aerodrome emergency plan is required to contain procedures for periodic testing of the adequacy of the plan and for reviewing the results in order to improve its effectiveness. Testing may be by joint exercises conducted so that:
  - aerodrome operators understand the SAR service organization, capabilities, and limitations; and
  - SAR facilities become familiar with the aerodrome layout, support facilities, and access points.

**e) ICAO Asia/Pacific SAR Plan (Version 5.0)**

Preferred SAR Capability Specifications (PSCS) 7.2. All States should:

- i) establish aerodrome emergency plans that provide for cooperation and coordination between the aerodrome operator and RCCs. The plans should include clear responsibilities for response to emergencies in proximity to, but outside, the aerodrome boundaries including adjacent waterways.

Review of Australia's National SAR plan coordination arrangements

2.2 As the SAR authority responsible for providing Australia's civil aeronautical SAR service and operation of JRCC Australia, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) conducted a review of Australian arrangements for alignment with the provisions in paragraph 2.1 above regarding response to emergencies in the vicinity of aerodromes.

2.3 The integrated nature of Australia's emergency management arrangements involves coordination at the local, State/Territory and national level depending on the scale and type of emergency. In the case of aircraft emergencies on aerodromes, the response will be coordinated by the police, aerodrome operator and emergency services in accordance with the relevant AEP or local emergency procedures in accordance with State or Territory emergency plan arrangements. For the emergency response to an aircraft accident in the vicinity of an aerodrome, but outside the aerodrome boundary, there needs to be a clear understanding between stakeholders at the local level, the police SAR authority at the State/Territory level, and the national SAR authorities (AMSA for civil aircraft

and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for military aircraft) regarding who will assume the role of overall coordinator and who will act in support.

2.4 AMSA’s review identified that the Australian National SAR Manual, which sets out agreed national responsibilities for SAR coordination, had no reference to AEP arrangements. The review also identified that clearer guidance was required regarding the responsibilities and roles of the national SAR and AEP stakeholders for emergencies in response to an aircraft that conducts a forced landing or ditching in the vicinity of, but outside, an aerodrome.

2.5 During this review, AMSA attempted to find a definition for an aerodrome boundary for the purpose of determining at what distance from an aerodrome an aerodrome emergency plan needs to cater for an aircraft accident, and at what distance it becomes a SAR response. After researching ICAO documentation, a sample of Australian and international AEP arrangements, and discussions with Australia’s civil aviation regulator and national airport rescue and firefighting service, a clear definition was unable to be determined. A general sampling of AEP arrangements showed AEP stakeholder coordination responsibilities and airport rescue unit response capabilities include variations in distances from airports based on a defined radius or only within a specified distance from the ends of runway ends on approach/departure paths, as well as general descriptions of geographical areas such as adjacent waterways.

2.6 Regardless of a clear definition for an aerodrome boundary, the review determined that for emergency response to aircraft accidents in the vicinity of, but outside, aerodromes there needs to be a clearer understanding between aerodrome emergency plan stakeholders and national SAR authorities regarding who has overall coordination authority and who supports that authority to ensure efficient collaborative effort, and to avoid any gaps in understanding, overlap or duplication during a response. This is important noting that the SAR response scenario can vary dependent on whether an aircraft accident occurs in a land or water environment, in an urban, regional or remote area including offshore Australian territories and islands, and the “best placed” authority for the overall coordination of response may vary. Australian military aerodromes need to also be considered noting that a number of those aerodromes include operations by both military and civil aircraft.

2.7 Following a proposal by AMSA to the Australian National SAR Council, amendments have been published in the latest edition of the Australian National SAR Manual to address this gap and to provide clearer guidance on coordination responsibilities. These amendments are aligned with Australia’s nationally agreed principle of “best placed SAR authority” where, for individual SAR responses, the different SAR authorities AMSA, the ADF and Police agencies may agree to transfer overall SAR coordination authority between them with the others acting in support. For example, although JRCC Australia is responsible for overall SAR coordination of a crash of a civil registered aircraft outside an aerodrome, if the distress location was in an urban area it is highly likely the relevant Police authority would be “best placed” as overall coordinator with JRCC Australia acting in support as required.

#### Australian National SAR Manual amendments

2.8 The amendments now published in the Australian National SAR Manual include:

- a) information regarding AEPs;
- b) provision of context regarding ICAO requirements under the Convention on International Civil Aviation, requirements under Australian Civil Aviation Safety Regulations, and guidance on AEPs within the IAMSAR Manual;
- c) guidance regarding response to aircraft emergencies on aerodromes versus response outside, but in the vicinity of, aerodromes as well as consideration of the existing national principle of SAR authority “Best Placed” to coordinate; and

- d) alignment with the systems of emergency management within the Australian context where the alerting, response and coordination arrangements for the response to aircraft incidents and accidents in the vicinity of aerodromes integrate national SAR responsibilities with State and Territory responsibilities, which in turn integrate State and Territory responsibilities with aerodrome emergency response arrangements at the local level. That is, State and Territory emergency plan arrangements effectively act as the ‘bridge’ between local aerodrome response and national SAR arrangements.

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

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) share information about how AEPs and SAR coordination arrangements are integrated within their SRRs for aircraft emergencies in the vicinity of, but outside, aerodrome boundaries including adjacent waterways; and
- c) discuss relevant matters as appropriate note the information contained in this paper.

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