



Sixth Meeting of CNS/MET Sub-Group of APANPIRG

Bangkok, Thailand, 15 – 19 July 2002

Agenda Item 14: Regional preparation for the MET Divisional Meeting

MAKING THE VOLCANIC ASH ADVISORY A HAZARD WARNING

(Presented by Australia)

SUMMARY

To propose that the status of the volcanic ash advisory message be upgraded to the official hazard warning of volcanic ash, equal in status to the SIGMET.

1. Introduction

1.1 This is a copy of a working paper Australia will present under Agenda Item 1.4 at the MET Divisional Meeting. This paper recommends that ICAO raise the status of the volcanic ash advisory message, including the graphical volcanic ash advisory (VAG), to that of the official volcanic ash warning for the presence of volcanic ash, equal in status to the SIGMET. This would enable ATC and airlines to respond more rapidly to a volcanic ash event, and improve safety.

2. Background

2.1 Over a considerable proportion of international air space SIGMETs are seldom issued in response to volcanic ash advisory messages from the VAACs, messages that indicate the existence of hazardous volcanic ash clouds. In other cases there can be considerable delays between issue of an advisory and issue by the relevant MWOs of the related SIGMET. There have also been many occasions when a corresponding SIGMET has not been issued.

2.2 SIGMETs for volcanic ash can also be misleading when volcanic ash clouds extend over two or more FIRs. Because the areal extent of a SIGMET is limited to the related FIR, the boundary for a volcanic ash SIGMET may be along the FIR boundary, when the ash cloud extends well beyond the boundary. Pilots could interpret the SIGMET as indicating the area beyond the FIR boundary as being ash free. The smaller the FIRs the greater the problem.

2.3 For extensive ash clouds, pilots may have to obtain a number of SIGMETs to determine the extent of the ash cloud. With the volcanic ash advisory, only one message is required.

3. Action for the MET Divisional Meeting

3.1 The meeting is invited to support the proposal that the volcanic ash advisory message be upgraded to be the primary hazard-warning message for volcanic ash.
