Grupo de Trabajo de Scrutinio (GTE) Large Height Deviation (LHD) White Paper

Description of Criteria

Note: *The following terms, expressions and definitions are not approved by the ICAO's Council and should be used for analysis of Large Height Deviation purpose only.*

Cleared Flight Level – the flight level at which the pilot was cleared or currently operating (eg, Aircrew accepts a clearance intended for another aircraft and ATC fails to capture the read back error or aircrew conforms to a flawed clearance delivered by ATC)

Reference Flight Level – The altitude that would have provided at least the minimum separation (vertical or horizontal) required

That flight level from which the Height Deviation is calculated; this level may be different from the Cleared Flight Level and must often be determined by the Scrutiny Group operational experts from the data in the Large Height Deviation report

Event Flight Level – the flight level of error, the incorrect altitude of operation for an identifiable period of time without having received an ATC clearance

Height Deviation – any altitude variation of 300ft or greater from the assigned altitude, these variations can be the result of turbulence, equipment malfunction, ATC loop errors, etc.

ATC Loop Errors – any incident where there is a misunderstanding between the pilot and the controller, failure to properly coordinate altitude information or unable to maintain situational awareness

Total Deviation – the total amount of feet between the altitudes of current operation prior to the deviation and the point at which the aircraft is once again under ATC supervision, a deviation that resulted in an increase of altitude will be recorded as a positive number, a deviation that resulted in a decrease of altitude will be recorded as a negative number

Hazard Zone – 300ft buffer zone above and below each flight level (Diagram 1-A)

Duration - length of time that an aircraft was level at an altitude that was not cleared by air traffic control, duration will be recorded in one second increments (Diagram 1-A), if the Scrutiny Group is unable to determine the time spent at incorrect flight level, a default value is assigned. The default values are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Duration Default Values

Radar	**Non-Radar**
90 s	90 s

Levels Crossed – the total number of flight levels between the point that the aircraft exits the cleared flight level and is once again under ATC supervision (Diagram 1-A)

Levels Final – the cleared flight level after the error/deviation

Code – a category and a subcategory assigned to each event (Diagram 1-B)

Rate of Climb or Descent – the climb and descent values are included in Table 2.

Table 2 Climb and Descent Values

Rate of Descent		**Rate of Climb**	
Drift	1000 ft per minute	Minimum	500
Normal	1500+ ft per minute	Normal	750
Rapid	2500+ ft per minute	Expedite	1250

Diagram 1-A

RVSM Flight Levels

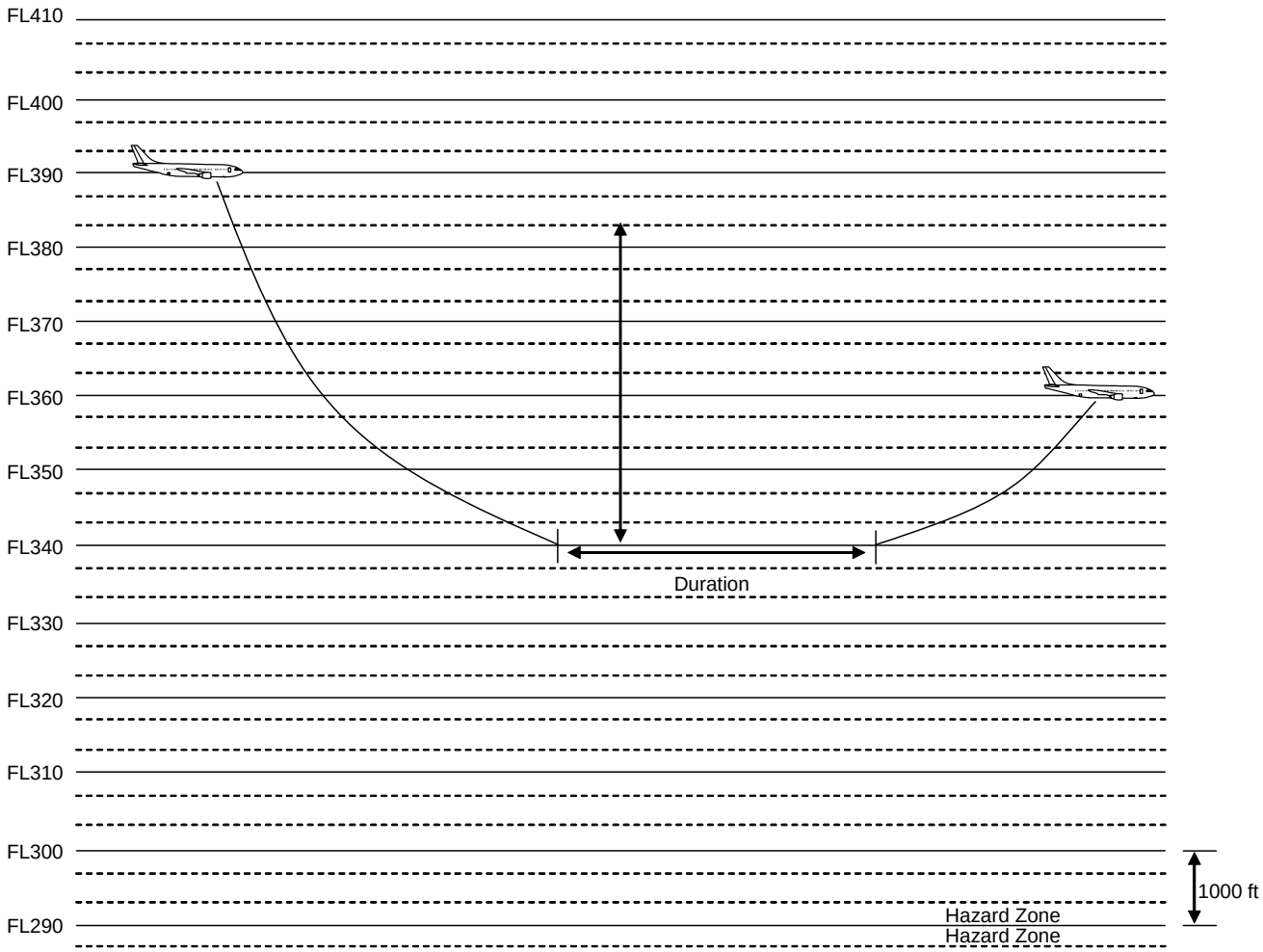

Diagram 1-B

Error Codes

Code	Cause of Large Height Deviation
A	Failure to climb/descend as cleared
B	Climb/descend without ATC clearance
C	Entry into airspace at an incorrect flight level
D	Deviation due to turbulence or other weather related cause
E	Deviation due to equipment failure
F	Deviation due to collision avoidance system (TCAS) advisory
G	Deviation due to contingency event
H	Aircraft not approved for operation in RVSM restricted airspace
I	ATC system loop error ; (e.g. pilot misunderstands clearance message or ATC issues incorrect clearance)
J	Equipment control error encompassing incorrect operations of fully functional FMS or navigation system (e.g. by mistake the pilot incorrectly operates INS equipment)
K	Incorrect transcription of ATC clearance or re-clearance into the FMS
L	Wrong information faithfully transcribed into the FMS (e.g. flight plan followed rather than ATC clearance or original clearance followed instead of re-clearance)
M	Error in ATC-unit-to-ATC-unit transition message
N	Negative transfer received from transitioning ATC-unit
O	Other
P	Unknown