

# CHAPTER 1. ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND REPORTING

## SECTION 2. INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS AND OCCURRENCES

**29. GENERAL.** This section contains guidance to be used by operations inspectors when involved with the investigation and reporting of operator incidents. This section supplements Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Order 8020.11, "Aircraft Accident and Incident Notification, Investigation, and Reporting."

**31. DEFINITIONS.** Inspectors involved with the investigation of an incident or occurrence should have a clear understanding of the definitions that follow. FAA Order 8020.11 contains the following definition for an incident which is repeated here only for clarification and convenience. Inspectors should refer to chapter 6 of FAA Order 8020.11 to review the investigative and reporting procedures for incident investigations. Inspectors should be aware that Flight Standards Service also uses the term "occurrence" to label an event that is investigated.

*A. Incident (Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem (PTRS) Code 1711 or 1712).* An incident is defined as "an occurrence involving one or more aircraft in which a hazard or a potential hazard to safety is involved but not classified as an accident due to the degree of injury and/or extent of damage." An incident could affect the safety of operations. This definition covers a broad range of events and may include the following:

- Damage to an aircraft (other than an accident)
- Runway incursion
- Pilot deviation
- Near midair collision (NMAC)

**NOTE: FAA Order 8020.11 identifies an NMAC as an incident. This incident should be investigated by using the procedures in chapter 6, section 2, of FAA Order 8020.11. When recording the work activities involved with an NMAC investigation, inspectors should use PTRS code 1720.**

*B. Occurrence (PTRS Code 1725).* An occurrence is defined as an event that is not readily discernible as an incident. Events, such as a low-speed abort or a turnback are considered occurrences and

must be investigated to determine the impact on safety of operations.

*C. Correlation Between an Occurrence and an Incident.* Not all events that are brought to the attention of Flight Standards Service have an obvious impact on the safety of operations, nor are they readily identifiable as an incident. Until an event can be identified as an incident, it should be regarded as an occurrence. The advantage of labeling an event as an occurrence is that it allows for an investigation of the facts for an accurate identification of the event without generating unnecessary reports.

**NOTE: Safety improvement recommendations may result from either incident or occurrence investigations.**

**33. RESPONSIBILITIES.** Managers of regional offices are responsible for investigating incidents occurring within their jurisdiction. This responsibility is usually delegated to the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). If an incident occurs in one regional geographic area, but the aircraft lands in another, the region in which the aircraft first landed is responsible for conducting the investigation.

**NOTE: Runway incursions, pilot deviations, and NMAC's are always investigated by the region of occurrence, regardless of where the aircraft lands.**

**35. NOTIFICATION.** FSDO's normally receive incident notification from either their regional operations center (ROC) or an air traffic (AT) facility. If the inspector observes or receives notification of an incident, including NMAC's, from a source other than an AT facility, and the incident is not known by the AT facility, the inspector shall immediately notify the nearest AT facility and provide the information that the facility needs to complete its notifications. The inspector may facilitate the notification process in this instance by contacting the ROC.

*FYI: FAA Form 8020-11, "Incident Report (Eight Part Set)," is no longer used for pilot deviations, and FAA Form 3556, "Near Midair Collision*

*Preliminary Report,” is no longer used for NMAC reports.*

**37. REPORTS.** This paragraph discusses guidelines for the reporting of certain types of incidents. For specific procedures to be followed, inspectors should refer to the latest edition of FAA Order 8020.11.

*A. Near Midair Collision.* An NMAC is classified as an incident involving one or more aircraft in which a hazard or a perceived potential hazard to safety is involved; however, it is not classified as an accident due to the minimal degree of injury or extent of damage.

(1) *Reporting.* NMAC's are reported on FAA Form 8020-21, "Preliminary Near Midair Collision Report," and should contain the following information:

- Date, time, and location of the NMAC
- Fix or facility nearest the NMAC
- The NMAC location in respect to the fix or facility
- Aircraft information, such as make, model, and registration number
- Type of flight rules during the NMAC
- The aircraft altitude during the NMAC
- A brief description of the NMAC, along with comments

(2) *Interviews.* In some cases, FAA personnel may meet the aircraft involved in the NMAC for interviews with the flightcrews. When this becomes necessary, the normal order of facilities contacted to send personnel is as follows:

- Airport traffic control tower (ATCT)
- Flight service station (FSS)
- Air route traffic control center (ARTCC)
- FSDO

(3) *Upgrade of Classification.* An NMAC with a fatality is classified as an aircraft accident and shall be reported and documented as both an aircraft accident and an NMAC.

(4) *Retention.* The reporting facility shall retain the NMAC investigation package for a period of 30 months, or as described in the latest revision of FAA Order 1350.15, "Records Organization, Transfer, and Destruction Standards."

*B. Pilot Deviations.* These are classified as incidents, and include non-standard pilot operations

such as flight at other-than-assigned altitudes, and controlled airspace intrusions.

(1) *Reporting.* Pilot deviations are reported on FAA Form 8020-17, "Preliminary Pilot Deviation Report," and should contain the following information:

- Incident report number
- Date, time, and location of the deviation
- Aircraft information
- The type of flight rules at time of deviation
- Aircraft altitude when the deviation was detected
- A brief description of the deviation, with appropriate comments

(2) *Retention.* The reporting facility shall retain the pilot deviation investigation package for 30 months, or as described in the latest revision of FAA Order 1350.15.

*C. Other Incident Reports.* Miscellaneous incidents are those other than NMAC's or pilot deviations, and may occur on an infrequent basis. Some incidents in this category are as follows:

(1) *Forcible Seizure of Aircraft (Hijack).* FAA personnel receiving information of a forcible seizure of an aircraft shall immediately notify their manager, who in turn shall immediately notify the Washington D.C. Operations Center (WOC), through the ROC.

(2) *Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT).* When a HAZMAT incident occurs, FAA personnel receiving the report must contact the regional Civil Aviation Security Office and give the appropriate information, including pertinent telephone numbers.

(3) *Sonic Boom Complaints.* When FAA personnel are notified of a sonic boom complaint, they shall refer the matter to the nearest military installation.

(4) *Unidentified Flying Object (UFO).* If any FAA employee receives a report of a UFO, the individual making the report should be referred to the nearest scientific establishment or institution of higher learning that has expressed interest in such reports. If concern is expressed that life or property might be endangered, refer the individual to the local police department.

**39. PTRS INPUT.** The PTRS shall be used to track the work activities of FAA inspectors during the investigations of occurrences and incidents, including NMAC's.

*A. Occurrence Investigation (PTRS Code 1725).* Most events that are “called in” to a FSDO can be initially regarded as occurrences. The PTRS offers the FAA supervisor a useful tool to record and track occurrences to a conclusion. Any event that is identified as an operations-related occurrence should be assigned to an inspector as an “open” item and entered into the PTRS using the activity code 1725, with appropriate comments in Section IV. Once a record of the occurrence has been established, it should be left open until the investigation is concluded. The supervisor can use these opened records to balance work activities and to track the progress of the investigation through the Open Items Report.

(1) When an occurrence investigation is concluded, and no further action is required, the inspector shall close the PTRS record with a “C,” with the appropriate comments in Section IV supporting the conclusion.

(2) When an occurrence investigation is concluded and the results indicate that the event is actually an incident, the inspector shall close the existing PTRS record with a “C” in the “Results” field, with the appropriate comments in Section IV. If further action is required, the inspector should open a new record ID for an incident investigation with activity code 1711 or 1712 in the “Activity” field and activity code 1725 in the “Tracking” field.

**NOTE: The “Triggers” field may be used for this function.**

*B. Incident Investigation (PTRS Code 1711 or 1712).* If an event is clearly identifiable as an incident, inspectors may enter it into the PTRS directly by either using activity code 1711 for incidents that will require on-site investigations or activity code 1712 for incidents that will not require on-site investigations.

(1) When an incident investigation is concluded, and no further action is required, the inspector shall close the PTRS record with a “C,” with the appropriate comments in Section IV supporting the conclusion.

(2) When an incident investigation is concluded, and the results indicate that the event is actually an accident, the inspector shall close the record with a “C” in the “Results” field, with the appropriate comments in Section IV. The inspector shall open a new record ID for the accident investigation under activity code 1702 or 1703 in the “Activity” field. Activity code 1711 or 1712 should be placed in the “Tracking” field to show that the accident investigation is the result of an incident.

**NOTE: If the incident results in an enforcement action, the inspector must place the locally generated Enforcement Investigative Report (EIR) number in the EIR field.**

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