The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is responsible for aviation safety in the United States and its territories. To help ensure the safety of persons and property on the ground and those onboard an unauthorized low-flying aircraft, FAA asks that anyone seeing an unauthorized low-flying aircraft to report that sighting to the nearest FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO), the preferred notification point, or the nearest FAA Air Traffic Control (ATC) facility. That ATC facility will then notify the appropriate FSDO. The telephone number for each type office may be found in your local telephone directory under U.S. Government. The number may be listed under Transportation, Department of or under Federal Aviation Administration. Telephone numbers and addresses of many FAA facilities are listed on the Internet at www.faa.gov. Check under the listing for "FAA Organizations." You can also check in "Public Inquiry" under "Low Flying Aircraft" to access FSDO locations.

FAA takes any complaint of an alleged violation of a Federal Aviation Regulation seriously. To aid in any investigation, the FAA FSDO aviation safety inspector assigned to the case will require as much information as possible to help identify the aircraft involved in the alleged incident.

The following information will aid in the investigation. Please keep a record of any information you provide FAA. You may want to write out a brief statement describing what you saw before you contact FAA to ensure you can provide as much information as possible and to help you organize the information. If your complaint results in an enforcement action, you may be required to testify or provide a written statement in the case.

DESIRED INFORMATION

You need to provide FAA as much of the following information as possible. A brief summary of what happened, where did it happen, when did it happen, how did it happen, and who did it, if known, is important. The FSDO will use the information to determine if a regulatory violation occurred and to help identify and locate the aircraft involved.

Please remember that not all low-flying aircraft are in violation of a regulation.

LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT REPORTING CHECKLIST

- ❑ What happened? Describe in detail.
- ❑ What was your estimate of the aircraft's altitude or height? How did you determine this estimate?
- ❑ Where did it happen? Describe location in detail.
- ❑ When did it happen? Date and time.
- ❑ What were the weather conditions at the time?
- ❑ How many times did the aircraft appear to be low? Did it continue to fly low in the area?
- ❑ What was the direction of flight?
- ❑ Who did it? List the name of the pilot or aircraft owner if known.
- ❑ What was the aircraft's registration number?
- ❑ Other witnesses. List all who witnessed the event. List names, telephone numbers, and addresses if known.
- ❑ Were the local police notified? Did a police officer witness the alleged incident? If so, list the name of the police department and telephone number of any officer involved if known.
- ❑ Did you feel threatened?
- ❑ Was more than one aircraft involved? If so, provide data on each aircraft involved.

AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION AIDS

- ❑ Type aircraft? Fixed-wing airplane, helicopter, glider, balloon, airship, ultralight vehicle, seaplane
- ❑ Was it military or civilian?
- ❑ Did you see a registration number?, If, so, what was it?
- ❑ List any partial numbers if complete number is not known.
- ❑ Was it a high-wing type aircraft or low-wing aircraft?
- ❑ What color was it? Did it have one or more other colors?
- ❑ Did it have any distinct markings, designs, or logos?
- ❑ Was it a jet-powered aircraft or piston-powered aircraft?
- ❑ Did it have propellers?
- ❑ How many engines or propellers did it have?
- ❑ How large was the aircraft?
- ❑ If it was a helicopter, how many main rotors did it have?
- ❑ If it was a helicopter, how many main rotor blades did it have?
- ❑ Was there anything unusual about the aircraft?

SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

Did you take any photographs or video of the event? If so, what type and focal length of lens was used? If a zoom type lens was used, was the lens zoomed in or out?

Were you able to zoom in on the aircraft's registration number, if it had one, to help identify the aircraft?

Did you try to photograph or video the aircraft against a background that would show height such as against a tall building, tower, hill, mountain, or other such object to aid in determining the aircraft's altitude? Please note, it is preferable to photograph the aircraft using a "normal" lens setting to avoid any misleading sized images caused by the compressive effects of a zoom or telephoto lens setting beyond the "normal" lens setting for the type of camera used.

If an object is included in the photograph or video to help show the aircraft's height, do you know the object's height?

If you photographed or videotaped the aircraft in flight from another aircraft, what was your aircraft's altitude when the photograph was taken or the video was made?

If film was used to photograph the aircraft, it is better if the negatives are not cut into smaller sections. You can ask your processor not to cut the film.

It is important to keep positive control of any type of recording media used to record the incident.

THE REGULATION

Please note there are instances when an aircraft may be operated in flight below these regulations with proper FAA approval. In addition, there are designated low-level military training routes where military aircraft may operate from the surface up to a specified altitude in visual and instrument meteorological conditions.

THE RULE

Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 91.119, Minimum safe altitudes, prohibits low flying except under the following conditions:

"Sec. 91.119 Minimum safe altitudes: General. Except when necessary for takeoff or landing, no person may operate an aircraft below the following altitudes: (a) Anywhere. An altitude allowing, if a power unit fails, an emergency landing without undue hazard to persons or property on the surface. (b) Over congested areas. Over any congested area of a city, town, or settlement, or over any open air assembly of persons, an altitude of 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle within a horizontal radius of 2,000 feet of the aircraft. (c) Over other than congested areas. An altitude of 500 feet above the surface, except over open water or sparsely populated areas. In those cases, the aircraft may not be operated closer than 500 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure. (d) Helicopters. Helicopters may be operated at less than the minimums prescribed in paragraph (b) or (c) of this section if the operation is conducted without hazard to persons or property on the surface. In addition, each person operating a helicopter shall comply with any routes or altitudes specifically prescribed for helicopters by the Administrator."

DO YOUR PART: REPORT LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT

Your help is needed in preventing unauthorized low-flying aircraft. Do your part, report such flying to the FAA.

For more information, you can write to the Federal Aviation Administration, General Aviation and Commercial Division, Operations Branch, AFS-820, 800 Independence Ave., SW, Washington DC 20591. The telephone number is 202-267-8212.

Cover aircraft photo by Thomas C. Shapiro

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20591

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

Help FAA Identify Unauthorized

LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration