

Obstruction Evaluation Group (OEG)

MEETING 23-02

Jennifer Hendi, FAA/AJV-A250, explained that at the last ACM there was an obstacle briefing by Aeronautical Information Services' Obstacle Data Team (ODT). They gave a briefing of the team's roles and responsibilities for obstacles in the National Airspace System (NAS), but there were still obstacle related questions that were outside of their responsibilities. This time, Jennifer said she arranged to provide a comprehensive briefing about how obstacles are handled by the FAA to include briefings by the Obstruction Evaluation Group (OEG) and the Office of Airport's Obstacle team.

Lan Norris, FAA/AJV-A540, [presented](#) a briefing on the roles and responsibilities of the OEG. He first shared a [video](#) that explains the obstruction evaluation process.

Lan said OEG is responsible for evaluating proposed structures to determine if they could have an adverse effect on aviation and are deemed a hazard. They are responsible for doing aeronautical studies under 14 CFR Part 77. [Slide 4](#) shows the limits of the FAA's authority. OEG recommends marking/lighting for aviation safety. Also, the FAA does not issue permits, which is a common misconception, but conducts aeronautical studies. Studies are summarized in determination letters, which are publicly available on the agency's website. OEG only conducts studies on structures within 12 NM of the U.S. coastline. However, Lan said OEG is currently in discussion with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to start looking at structures outside of 12 NM.

[Slide 5](#) explains more about OEG. Lan said that this year, OEG has already processed over 160,000 aeronautical studies. Lan then explained how aeronautical studies are processed ([slides 6-14](#)). A notice of construction must be filed on the Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis (OE/AAA) website at least 45 days in advance of the construction start date. OEG then coordinates with multiple offices to review proposals. If there are issues, a Notice of Preliminary Findings (NPF) letter will be issued. The NPF often leads to changes being made that result in the proposal no longer having an adverse effect upon aviation. OEG often coordinates with air traffic facilities to determine whether the structure is an actual hazard to aviation depending on the type of airspace usage. Upon completion, a final FAA determination is reached. The conclusion of the study is either a Determination of Hazard (DOH) or a Determination of No Hazard (DNH) letter. DNH letters may include conditions the proponent must follow to ensure aviation safety. Lan noted that DOH letters are rare because there are usually other actions that can be taken to mitigate the hazard. He emphasized that DNH is not a permit and does not supersede local law or authority.

Doug Willey, ALPA, asked who is responsible to communicate an evaluation finding to the community. Lan explained that all evaluations are public record. There is also a subscription service to receive notifications when a determination has been issued. For projects circulated for public comment, postcards and emails are sent. Doug said they have had issues with determinations not being communicated to pilots, or if communicated, not being done so in a usable way because the NOTAMS that were issued were useless. He shared an example of a crane off I-95 in Fort Lauderdale that was a huge safety issue. Lan said in a situation like that, OEG captures the obstruction determination information in the NPF, which is communicated directly to the facility that is impacted. Once they work with air traffic and determine the hazard is acceptable, then, before the obstruction is constructed, a temporary NOTAM needs to be submitted. Doug explained that in the situation he described, there was

a disconnect in the process that resulted in a NOTAM that was not usable. Pat Mulqueen, FAA/AJV-A440, explained this scenario is about tactical changes to cranes and issuing FDC NOTAMs. The FAA has three days to issue these NOTAMs to the aviation community. He said they put out 40,000 NOTAMs a year and sometimes they make mistakes. He requested if anyone notices a problem, to let them know and they will fix it. Lan said it is not a perfect system. There are thousands of cranes going up and down every day. If one slips through the cracks, please let OEG know so they can get it right.

Dan Wacker, FAA/AFS-420, asked if OEG had determined how the addition of the departure end of the runway (DER) crossing height that is being added to the criteria will impact evaluations. Lan said he is not aware of this change. Dan said there will be DER crossing restrictions with the new Instructions for Continued Airworthiness (ICA) criteria. Lan said the Obstacle Impact Team is responsible for evaluating IFR procedures. Julie Morgan, FAA/AJV-A310, said the Instrument Flight Procedures Teams provides the IFR impact on procedures back to OEG. She suggested Dan should contact Pat Mulqueen and Johnnie Baker, FAA/AJV-A430, about this issue.