Obstacle Briefing

MEETING 23-01

Eric Freed, FAA/AJV-A320, manager of the Obstacle Data Team (ODT), briefed the audience about how obstacles are handled by the FAA. He explained that ODT is part of the Aeronautical Information Group and is comprised of two sub-teams. ODT investigates obstacles that might be hazardous. You can read ODT's mission statement on slide 5 and a list of the team's responsibilities on slide 6. Slide 7 provides a list of sources for the Obstacle Authoritative Source (OAS) data. Slide 8 shows the workflow process, which includes data source analysis, data investigation, data verification, data review, delivery to OAS, and file management. Obstacle data arrives from a variety of sources as shown on slide 10. The obstacle information is then used to develop and update aeronautical charts, and related digital publications. The data is disseminated in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. The following deliverables are extracted from the OAS and are available on the FAA's public website:

- Digital Obstacle File (DOF). See slide 13-16 for more information.
- Daily Digital Obstacle File (DDOF). See slides 17-18 for more information.
- Weekly Construction Notices. See slides 19-20 for more information.

Slide 22 shows a list of stakeholders who use the obstacle data.

Slides 23-30 provide information about the tools and software platforms the team uses. Obstacle Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis (OE/AAA) includes all the studies the team evaluates. It is the primary source for obstacle evaluations. Documentum is their file management system, but the FAA no longer supports it, so the team is transitioning to Alfresco. The team uses Google Earth Pro to get the relative positions of the obstacles for charting. They also have access to Digital Globe, which provides access to the most current National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) data. The team also uses a coordinate conversion tool, which shows the obstacles as latitudes/longitudes, allowing for the most accurate positioning. The team has taken on obstacle lighting outages recently, which may lead to Notices to Air Missions (NOTAMs), and uses the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) database in order to have more authority when dealing with public. The Third Party Survey Site (TPSS) is also available to ODT to collect survey documents.

Eric noted that the Obstacle Evaluation Group in Aeronautical Information Services and the Office of Airports also have responsibilities for obstacles.

Rich Boll, NBAA, thanked Eric for the briefing. He asked if the conversion tool was available to external teams. Jason Gibson, FAA/AJV-A322, said their version of the tool is internal, but he will look into whether it can be made available to others and coordinate with Rich.

Jay Leitner, American Airlines, asked for access to the FAA's Airport Data and Information Portal (ADIP) to retrieve the obstacles in an easier to use format. Jason explained that ADIP is an Office of Airports

product and that all airport obstacles within 20,000 feet of the runway are under the purview of Office of Airports.

Clint Carter, AeroNavData, asked if there are plans to identify LED lit towers, specifically for Part 135 helicopter air landing with night vision goggles. Jason said if a structure has lighting, ODT adds it to the database. He's not sure about specifying LED lights. He said if there are specific concerns related to an obstacle to report that through the Aeronautical Information Portal.

Mike Webb, FAA/AFS-420, asked where completed survey information is stored. Jason said the information is sent to National Geodetic Survey (NGS) and from there it is added to the Obstacle Authoritative Source (OAS). There is a public link for surveys.

Dan Wacker, FAA/AFS-420, asked whether private airport obstacle data goes through ODT and NGA. Jason said that question will need to go to the Office of Airports. Dan said FAA Order 8260.19 requires only one database, and that is OAS, but it seems like it does not contain all the information needed. Third party data should be there. Jason said obstacles off-airport and third party surveys should go through the Obstacle Evaluation Group (OEG). Surveys can capture both on and off-airport data, and his team does look at that. Dan asked whether FAA Order 8260.19 is incorrect. Jason said he believes it was written to a future state based on requirements that have not been implemented.

Eric added that Office of Airports focuses on on-airport obstacles and OEG focuses on off-airport evaluations. He suggested that a combined briefing with ODT, OEG and the Office of Airports would be useful at a future ACM.

Jason and Eric provided links to the following resources:
- Universal Data Delivery Format (UDDF): https://nfdc.faa.gov/nfdcApps/services/publicData/uddfList.jsp
- Light Outages Report: https://nfdc.faa.gov/nfdcApps/public/#/lightOutage
- Aeronautical Inquires: https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/aero_data/Aeronautical_Inquiries/
- ODT Email: 9-AMC-AJV-DataSheets@faa.gov