NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N 8900.690

National Policy

Effective Date:
3/22/24

Cancellation Date:
3/22/25

SUBJ: Approval of Offshore Standard Approach Procedures, Airborne Radar Approaches, and Helicopter En Route Descent Areas

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice announces new guidance for approval of Offshore Standard Approach Procedures (OSAP), Airborne Radar Approaches (ARA), and Helicopter En Route Descent Areas (HEDA) as specified in Advisory Circular (AC) 90-80, Approval of Offshore Standard Approach Procedures, Airborne Radar Approaches, and Helicopter En Route Descent Areas. The amendment to weather reporting requirements allows for expanded weather boxes and increased instrument flight rules (IFR) operations. It also provides acceptable methods for obtaining operational approval and compliance with the new requirements by operators conducting offshore instrument operations authorized in Operations Specification (OpSpec)/Management Specification (MSpec)/Letter of Authorization (LOA) H104, Helicopter Offshore Instrument Operations: Offshore Standard Approach Procedure (OSAP), Airborne Radar Approach (ARA), and Helicopter En Route Descent Area (HEDA) Operations, under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts 91, 91 subpart K (part 91K), and 135.

2. Audience. The primary audiences for this notice are operators, Flight Standards (FS) Safety Assurance principal inspectors (PI), and designees with oversight responsibilities for parts 91, 91K, and 135. The secondary audience includes FS personnel in the Office of Safety Standards.

3. Where You Can Find This Notice. You can find this notice on the MyFAA employee website at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices and the Dynamic Regulatory System (DRS) at https://drs.faa.gov. Operators and the public can find this notice on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) website at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/orders_notices and DRS.

4. Background. A reduction in the number of Gulf of Mexico (GoM) Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) stations has dramatically reduced the ability of the operators to use approved Helicopter Offshore Instrument Operations, hindering operations and increasing risk to the operator. FAA Surveillance and Broadcast Services (SBS) commissioned a Volpe study to determine if the existing weather box could be expanded. The FAA conducted a Safety Risk Management (SRM) panel to address the issue and determined expansion was warranted.

5. Explanation of Policy Changes. This notice informs the operational facilities of a revision to OSAPs, ARAs, and HEDAs as specified in AC 90-80.

a. FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 3, Chapter 18, Section 7. Guidance for OpSpec/MSpec/LOA H104 is amended to revise weather reporting requirements for two stations.

b. AC 90-80C CHG 1. Paragraphs 2.8.2, 3.8.2, and 4.7.2, Offshore Environment Operation, are changed as follows:

"Operators approved to conduct IFR operation in the offshore environment in accordance with parts 91, 91K, and 135 for the appropriate operational approval (e.g., LOA, management specification (MSpec), or operations specification (OpSpec)) may comply with the requirements by any one of the following methods or one with an equivalent level of safety approved by the Administrator:

1. One station: The operation coordinates must be within 10 NM of an approved weather reporting station.

2. Two stations: The operation coordinates must be within an observed area defined by the location of two approved weather reporting stations.

a. In the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) as defined in Figure 2-1 and excluding the Mississippi Delta bounded area in Figure 2-2:

- The observation area centerline is established by the actual bearing between the two stations; the actual distance between the two stations is not to exceed 80 NM. The centerline must continue on either side of each weather station by 10 NM.
- The lateral width of the observed area may not be greater than 40 NM on either side of the established centerline.
- The resultant maximum observation area is a rectangle 100 NM by 80 NM.

Figure 2-1. GoM Expanded Weather Box Boundary

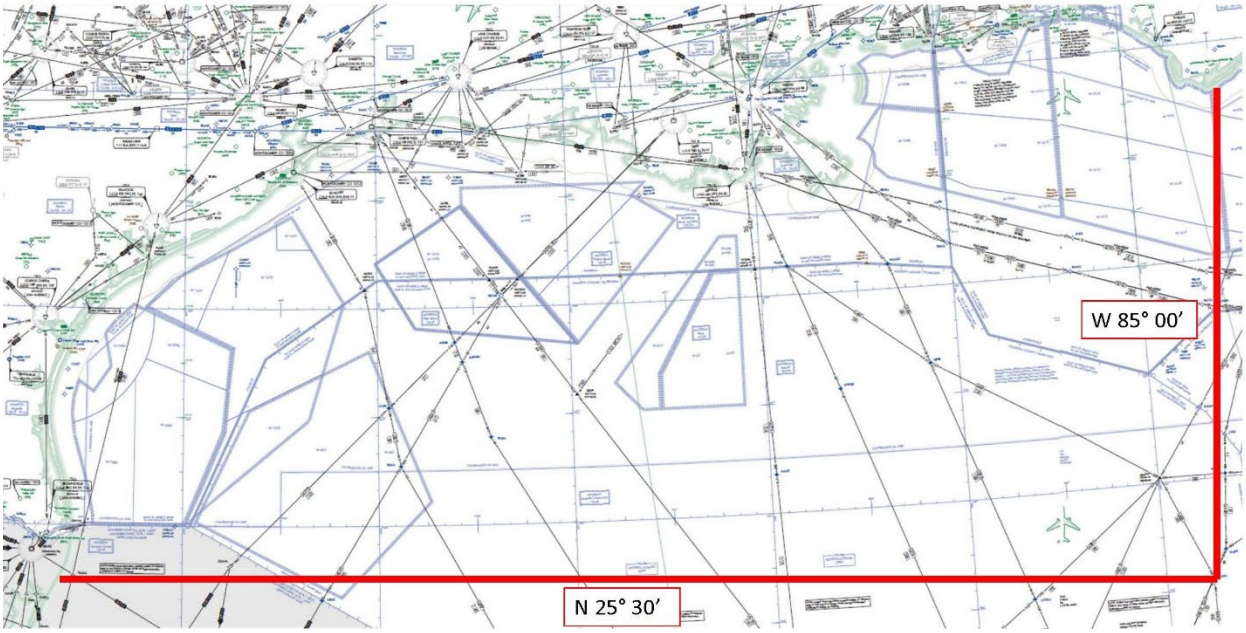

Figure 2-2. Excluded Areas for GoM Expanded Weather Box Boundary

Corner	Latitude	Longitude
NW	30 25'34.82"N	89 43'53.27"W
NE	30 21'42.70"N	87 52'19.31"W
SW	28 50'26.73"N	89 47'41.13"W
SE	28 47'17.53"N	87 56'59.98"W

b. In all other areas:

- The observation area centerline is established by the actual bearing between the two stations; the actual distance between the two stations is not to exceed 40 NM. The centerline must continue either side of each weather station by 10 NM.
- The lateral width of the observed area may not be greater than 40 NM on either side of the established centerline.
- The resultant maximum observation area is a rectangle 60 NM by 80 NM.”

6. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following service units: the Air Traffic Organization’s Program Management Organization (AJM) and System Operations Services (AJR), Office of General Aviation Safety Assurance (GASA), and Flight Standards Service (FS).

7. Disposition. We will incorporate the information in this notice into Order 8900.1 before this notice expires. Direct questions or comments concerning the information in this notice to the Flight Technologies and Procedures Division (AFS-400) at 202-267-8790.

Hugh Thomas for
Lawrence Fields
Executive Director, Flight Standards Service