

**ORDER**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

8000.49B

5/21/92

**SUBJ: FLIGHT STANDARDS GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAM**

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1. **PURPOSE.** This order defines Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) geographic area responsibility, establishes policy and provides guidance pertinent to the Flight Standards Geographic Work Program. It is to be used in conjunction with the Flight Standards Geographic Work Program and the National Program Guidelines (NPG) for the development and implementation of Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and International Field Office (IFO) work programs with regard to certificate holders under Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) Part 121 and 135, operations specifications under Part 129 of the FAR, and persons designated as Representatives of the Administrator under Part 183 of the FAR.

2. **DISTRIBUTION.** This order is distributed to the branch level in the Flight Standards Service, and the Office of Aviation System Standards; to all Regional Administrators; to the Directors of the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, and the Europe, Africa, and Middle East Office; to the Flight Standards Branch at the FAA Academy; to the Flight Standards Division in the Europe, Africa, and Middle East Office; to the branch level in the regional Flight Standards Divisions; to all Flight Standards District Offices; to all International, and Aeronautical Quality Assurance Field Offices; to all Flight Standards Certificate Management Offices; and to all Aircraft Evaluation Groups.

3. **CANCELLATION.** Order 8000.49A, Flight Standards District Office Geographic Area Responsibility Concept, dated 7/26/90, is cancelled.

4. **BACKGROUND.**

a. Flight Standards is organized into regional and district offices, each of which have a discrete geographical area for which it is responsible. FSDO's are responsible for all surveillance, certification, and investigative work functions which occur within their geographical boundaries (with certain exceptions as noted in this order).

b. Regional Flight Standards divisions establish offices or units which are dedicated to certificate oversight responsibilities for the large complex air carriers. These certificate holding district offices (CHDO) are responsible for the overall work program planning to assure adequate surveillance and airman certification for the large air carriers which have facilities widely spread in different geographic areas. Since the operations of many air carriers transcend the boundaries of the district office which holds their certificates, the effectiveness of the geographic program depends on enhanced communication and close coordination between the CHDO and the geographic offices.

c. In the past, Flight Standards did not have a consistent policy to identify which district office was responsible for accomplishing work related to the operators which transcend geographical boundaries. Flight Standards recognizes that a formal geographic structure is necessary to address the responsibility for the work program accomplishment in district offices located in different

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Initiated By: AFS-510

geographic areas from the CHDO. Under Project SAFE, tools such as the Vital Information Subsystem (VIS), Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem (PTRS), and standard position descriptions were developed. These tools are available for use by district office managers to assess the geographic environment and to establish the geographic structure suitable to accomplish the geographic work program responsibilities of that office.

## 5. DEFINITIONS.

a. Certificate Holding District Office (CHDO). This term refers to the Flight Standards district office (FSDO) or Certificate Management Office (CMO) holding an air operator or air agency certificate, or the IFO holding a foreign entity's air agency certificate or FAR Part 129 operations specifications.

b. Certificate Management. A term describing the management system used as a basis for granting or denying an air operator or air agency certificates, and the surveillance necessary to assure that the certificate holder continues to meet original certification requirements. This management system requires analysis and proper application by the CHDO of surveillance findings communicated by the geographic offices charged with monitoring the ongoing activities of such air operators and air agencies.

c. Certificate Management Office (CMO). A Flight Standards office whose resources are dedicated to the administration and certificate management of one or more complex major or large regional air carrier operating certificate(s).

d. Certificate Management Unit (CMU). An operations and/or airworthiness unit having certificate responsibility. Some district offices have combined operations and airworthiness disciplines into one unit under the title of Certificate Management Unit. In either case, these CMU's usually have certificate management responsibility for one large and/or several smaller air operators and/or air agency certificates.

e. Contract Maintenance/Agreements. For the purpose of this order, maintenance that is contracted or arranged by an operator from vendors listed in the operator's manuals and/or approved vendors' list (including repair stations), as well as persons performing emergency maintenance. Contract fueling, passenger and cargo handling, etc., are not "contract maintenance." These service vendors must be listed in the operator's vendors list. These functions are inspected as if the function were being performed by the geographic operator itself.

f. Geographic Area. The geographic borders that define a district office's area of responsibility. For the purposes of a CMO, the geographic area is defined as the district boundaries in which the CMO is located with respect to its assigned operators.

g. Geographic Concept. This concept is integral to the certificate management function. It refers to surveillance, airman certification and reporting of a geographic operator's activities outside the boundaries of its CHDO. The geographic concept provides a means, on behalf of certificate management, of assisting with all certificate functions outside the physical boundaries of the CHDO's geographic area of responsibility.

h. Geographic Operator. An operator, as defined in this order, conducting activities within the geographic area of a district office that DOES NOT HOLD the operator's certificate or operations specifications.

i. Geographic Program Manager/Partial Program Manager (GPM/PPM). An aviation safety inspector assigned to a geographic unit or section. Some offices however, may not have GPM's/PPM's on staff, but do have inspectors who have geographic responsibility. These offices are likely to be a field office satellite staffed by two or three inspectors. For the purpose of this order, reference to GPM/PPM means any inspector who has been assigned geographic surveillance and certificate management support responsibility for a particular area, airport(s), and/or air operator(s).

j. Geographic Unit. This is the district office unit or section organization responsible and accountable for the surveillance and certification support of geographic operators conducting activities within the geographic unit's district.

k. Major Air Carrier. For the purposes of this order, a major air carrier is one which operates 100 or more aircraft, and earns \$1 billion dollars or more in annual gross revenues. Major air carrier certificates will be managed by a dedicated CMO or CMU as complexity warrants.

l. Operator. For the purpose of this order, this term means an air operator certificated under FAR Parts 121 and/or 135; an air agency certified under FAR Part 145; or, a foreign flag air carrier operating under Part 129 of the FAR.

m. Principal Inspectors (PI's). Aviation safety inspectors who have approval authority for air operators or air agencies.

## 6. GENERAL GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAM POLICY.

a. It is Flight Standards policy that geographic surveillance and inspection are accomplished with the same dedication and priority that is required for the accomplishment of certificate management responsibilities.

b. Regional Flight Standards Division Managers are responsible for ensuring that effective and timely surveillance, inspection and certification actions are accomplished on all aviation activities which occur within their geographic area of responsibility, including the allocation of fiscal resources to support accomplishment of these actions.

c. District Office and Field Office managers and supervisors are directly accountable for the preparation and accomplishment of geographic work programs in accordance with the Flight Standards National Program Guidelines and other work program planning guidance.

d. FSDO managers are responsible for budgeting, staffing, and establishing an appropriate structure to accomplish a geographic work program focused on the activities of those operators who operate into, within, and out of the geographic boundaries of that office. While this order is not intended to require that each office have a geographic unit, managers are responsible for allocating resources to cover the geographic work of that office. For the purposes of this order, the term geographic unit will refer to whatever structure each office develops to meet their geographic responsibilities.

e. In effect, a district office has the same inspection and surveillance responsibilities, excluding certificate management, for those operators within its geographic boundaries whose certificates are held by another office as it does for the activity of the operators whose certificates it holds. This concept does not minimize the responsibility of the CHDO Principal Inspectors (PI) for overall certificate management.

f. Geographic Program Managers (GPM) and Partial Program Managers (PPM) are an integral part of the certificate management team and serve an essential role as the eyes and ears of the principal inspectors' by accomplishing inspection, surveillance and airman certification functions. Timely and direct communication or coordination between Flight Standards offices and/or between principal inspectors' and geographic units are essential to the success of the certificate management team.

g. PI's have oversight responsibilities with approval/disapproval authority along with the ability to influence the certificate holder's procedures, methods, standards and systemic policies. In matters concerning an operator's approved policies or procedures, the GPM/PPM's are responsible for recommending changes to those programs to the appropriate principal inspector.

## 7. GEOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT.

a. Structure: Each manager must analyze the type of geographic activities (e.g., FAR Parts 121, 135, training facilities, maintenance bases, etc.) and the extent of these activities to determine the office structure best suited to accomplishment of geographic responsibilities. In some offices, the complexity and nature of the geographic activity may dictate a geographic unit with a staff reporting to a supervisory program manager. The scope of work in other offices may require only one or two geographic inspectors to carry out the geographic responsibilities. In any case, district office managers and regional Flight Standards division managers are responsible for staffing a field office with enough appropriately trained and experienced inspectors to accomplish all planned geographic surveillance.

b. Since the geographic inspectors' primary responsibility is inspection and surveillance of operators' activities which often occur beyond the normal work day, managers should initiate an irregular, non-standard inspector work schedule when developing the geographic structure. Effective geographic inspection and surveillance can only be accomplished if the FAA's efforts parallel the aviation industry's activities.

c. Environment. The geographic air operator community may be the most dynamic segment of the aviation community assigned to a FSDO. This is because the size, scope, and nature of geographic operations within a district can change without prior coordination or notification. These changes notwithstanding, it is still the geographic office's responsibility to maintain a surveillance schedule that provides for a continuing assessment of the size, scope, and nature of the geographic operations that are being conducted within its district.

(1) Assessing the geographic environment is an essential function of both the geographic unit and the CHDO. GPM's/PPM's have direct access to current activities involving the operations and facilities for each air operator. This direct observation is invaluable in developing the complete environmental VIS file for each operator. Since PI's are in the best position to be knowledgeable of pending changes and future plans specific to each operator, close coordination will result in an accurate and complete representation of the geographic environment when entered into the environmental files of the VIS. Accurate and timely entry of environmental data into the VIS is the responsibility of the geographic unit. This information will also have a direct impact on geographic unit/office staffing requirements.

(2) It is equally important that this environmental VIS data be continuously reviewed and updated. One way of maintaining a continuous assessment of the geographic environment is to be alert for environmental changes with every sub-base, or line station surveillance conducted at a geographic operator facility and make necessary corrections to the VIS at completion of the surveillance.

8. WORK PROGRAM - GENERAL. Geographic Program Managers are responsible for developing and executing a geographic work program, from the forecast and plan developed at the beginning of the fiscal year, to ensure adequate surveillance and airman certification for all geographic operators who operate within their geographic boundaries. There are several key considerations in developing these work programs. Managers and supervisors may need to revise their geographic work program plan during the year because a geographic unit has little control over its workload. A quarterly review of all PTRS activities should be conducted to determine if the surveillance program should be adjusted.

a. Inspectors assigned to the geographic structure are an important part of the certificate management function and certificate management team. Since they are geographically located where work functions are being performed, they are uniquely aware of current situations and events and able to quickly provide information to CHDO's and PI's when necessary. These inspectors are also available when a short notice surveillance or investigation requirement is surfaced by either the geographic unit or CHDO.

b. The key to this effective certificate management team concept is communication and coordination between geographic offices and PI's while developing a geographic work program. In addition to having a thorough knowledge of the number and types of activities in a geographic district, GPM/PPM's must consider trends, issues and overall complexity of each operator and location when developing a work program.

c. PI's will provide geographic units in the districts where their assigned air carriers

operate with applicable minimum work program requirements. This will ensure system wide certificate oversight responsibilities are met. Geographic units will incorporate PI work program requirements in the development of a geographic work program to ensure the overall certificate management goals are met. This planning must be flexible to allow for ongoing changes and systemic trends forwarded by the CHDO relative to their operators. This may include special emphasis requirements for an operator as well as the need to shift program emphasis from operator to operator as situations require.

d. PIs and geographic units will develop work programs in accordance with National Program Guidelines in Order 1800.56 (Administration of Aviation Standards Activity Program), and the guidelines within this order, based upon the geographic operator environment. A geographic unit's primary function is surveillance and certificate management support. Therefore, a majority of the available geographic inspector work hours are to be committed to surveillance functions. Order 1800.56 is re-distributed to all IFO's, CMO's and FSDO's each August in the form of a Notice containing change information.

9. WORK PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING - MAJOR AIR CARRIERS. Since surveillance of major air carriers presents a complex planning task, in that a great deal of information which must be considered may not be available to the GPM/PPM's, PIs for all major air carriers shall prepare a surveillance plan for their assigned air carriers. This surveillance plan shall be specific as to the number of surveillance activities to be accomplished by PTRS activity code and the location/geographic unit responsible for accomplishing the activity. The formulation of a major air carrier surveillance plan should take into consideration the following elements.

a. Environment. Major air carrier environmental VIS data must be considered when developing the geographic work program. Information concerning operator facilities, fleet size, and composition shall be included in the planning process.

b. Statistical Data. Operational performance of the major air carrier shall be considered. Inspection frequency and other surveillance activities will be planned as needed based upon flight segments flown and annual fleet utilization by the carrier.

c. Statistical Analysis. PIs will consider major air carrier performance in developing geographic work plans, and will consider the results of previous national and regional inspections conducted under the National Aviation Safety Inspection Program (NASIP). Emphasis on areas showing statistical adverse trends shall receive additional emphasis. Major air carrier occurrences, incidents, accidents or indicators of financial distress will be targeted for increased surveillance activity in the annual planning process. Statistical information developed by analysis of PTRS data, Enforcement Information Subsystem (EIS), Accident/Incident Data Subsystem (AIDS), or other FAA accepted statistical analysis which indicates air carrier financial distress or possible bankruptcy.

d. Surveillance Plans. Major air carrier surveillance plans will be developed in accordance with National Work Program Guidelines. To achieve consistent work program plans for major air carriers, coordination during the development of the plans will be required with the Flight Standards National Field Office (FSNFO), AFS-500. An annual national work program conference will be held at least 60 days prior to the beginning of the fiscal year work program implementation. This planning conference will include major air carrier principal inspectors and representatives of AFS-500.

e. Work Accomplishment. Since some geographic units may be unable to fulfill the requisite NPG surveillance, geographic units will return a report through the Regional Flight Standards Division to the requesting CHDO, listing those surveillance activities which are not accomplishable due to fiscal resources or personnel limitations. In such cases, the responsible district office manager or geographic program supervisor shall also provide an estimate of the additional resources required to accomplish the requested surveillance. Information copies shall be forwarded to AFS-500 for analysis and re-assignment of required work program activities.

f. Work Program Revisions. The acceptance by a geographic unit of a work program plan for a major air carrier does not preclude a geographic unit from planning additional surveillance based upon data obtained from local or national trend analysis.

#### 10. SURVEILLANCE OF FOREIGN FLAG AIR CARRIERS.

a. Geographic units should plan to include in the annual work program requirements, routine and unannounced ramp inspections of foreign flag air carriers who conduct operations into a geographic district offices area of responsibility. Geographic offices are no longer required to inform the assigned PI's prior to conducting these inspections. However, since these inspections must be conducted with the highest degree of tact and diplomacy, only those inspectors who have received appropriate OJT on the subject shall be assigned inspection duties of foreign flag air carriers. Each regional Flight Standards division shall be responsible to determine the level of training necessary for each inspector and shall maintain a current list of those inspectors authorized to conduct inspection and surveillance work functions on foreign flag air carriers.

b. Types of Inspections Permitted. Normally surveillance of foreign flag air carriers shall be limited in scope to those items listed in FAA Orders 8400.10 and 8300.10 with respect to foreign air carriers.

c. Registration Status of Aircraft Operated by Foreign Flag Air Carriers. Routine and unannounced surveillance of foreign flag air carriers conducting operations with foreign registered aircraft should be limited to those operations conducted within the United States. Routine and unannounced surveillance of foreign flag air carriers conducting operations with U.S. registered aircraft may be conducted anywhere.

d. Safety of Flight Discrepancies. If an inspector discovers a safety of flight discrepancy during a ramp inspection, that discrepancy must immediately be brought to the attention of the foreign air carrier, and in all cases the pilot-in-command of the aircraft. Inspectors should communicate the discrepancy to the office responsible for the oversight of the carriers' operations specifications as soon as possible. Inspectors and managers should review FAA Orders 8400.10 and 8300.10 for additional actions that may be required.

11. REQUESTS FOR AIRMAN CERTIFICATION. Fulfilling requests for airman certification and checking such as initial certification and/or add-on ratings, proficiency checks, initial operating experience, check airman observations, etc., is the responsibility of the district office in whose geographic area the activity will take place. If the district office is unable to meet the request due to unforeseen requirements for qualified personnel or fiscal resources, the district office will query other district offices within the region to obtain an inspector with the necessary qualifications. If

none of the district offices within a region have an inspector qualified to conduct the required function, then the district office shall inform the regional Flight Standards Division. Regional Flight Standards Divisions will coordinate with other regional Flight Standards Divisions, as appropriate, to obtain qualified personnel. Regardless of the personnel ultimately used for the certification function, it shall remain the responsibility of the geographic field office and/or region where the work is to be performed to fund the activity. Funds expended by a certificate holding region to support airman certification due to a geographic district office's lack of qualified personnel shall be reported quarterly to AFS-500. The report should contain the date, locations where the certification function was performed, the air operators name, and the cost of supporting each airman certification function, in terms of travel and per diem. This report should be sent within 30 days following the end of each fiscal quarter to AFS-500 and the Executive Planning and Resource Committee.

12. GEOGRAPHIC UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES. Geographic unit GPM's/PPM's are responsible for:

a. Familiarization with each carrier's operating procedures in advance of conducting inspections. Information on the carrier's operating procedures can be obtained through several sources, including direct from PI's or designated representatives, FAA.MAIL messages, or news letters from the CHDO, videotape presentations and seminars, and carrier's manuals available at line stations. It is important to be fully aware that what may be an approved procedure for one operator may not be approved for another operator.

b. Informing PI's of possible problem areas observed in manuals, procedures and other systemic issues and providing PI's with recommendations for change to these programs .

c. Processing and follow-up of Enforcement Investigation Reports. When a violation is believed to have occurred involving a geographic operator, the investigation and processing of the enforcement report becomes a geographic program responsibility. It cannot be overemphasized that uninhibited communication is the cornerstone of the geographic-certificate management relationship. This is especially true when operator noncompliance is suspected. In that case, GPM's/PPM's are required by FAA Order 2150.3A, Compliance and Enforcement Program, to communicate findings of suspected noncompliance to the responsible PI, or designated representative, to coordinate the enforcement action intended before proceeding with the other investigatory procedures outlined in FAA Order 2150.3A.

13. CHDO RESPONSIBILITIES: The principal inspectors and their representatives are responsible for:

a. Providing documentation, in a timely manner, to geographic units in support of investigations involving geographic operators.

b. Educating geographic units on their assigned operators' procedures and policies and continually updating this education as changes occur. The CHDO must develop an appropriate means to ensure this education process is effective (i.e., newsletters, FAA.MAIL, etc.)

c. Advising geographic units of certificate holder activity, or planned activity, which may affect staffing, work planning, etc, as necessary.

- d. Keeping geographic units informed of significant, or immediate action, on operator issues through whatever means are appropriate.
- e. Reviewing and analyzing inspection reports and surveillance reports received through PTRS and other means as appropriate to detect possible unfavorable trends and providing results to geographic offices responsible for ongoing surveillance and/or follow-up as necessary.
- f. Advising and coordinating with geographic units when a NASIP or regional inspection of their assigned operators have been scheduled to avoid duplication of effort and disruption of the operator.
- g. Coordinating all planned visits to assigned operator's facilities located in geographic office areas of responsibility by CHDO personnel. While inspection, surveillance and airman certification of an operator's activities and facilities are the responsibility of the district office in which the activities occur, PI's have oversight responsibility and must be knowledgeable of the activities of their assigned operator system-wide. The PI's and GPM's/PPM's should take advantage of such CHDO visits to share information and to educate the GPM's/PPM's on the operator's procedures, policies and operations.

14. JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES OF GEOGRAPHIC UNITS AND CHDO's. In addition to responsibilities specific to either geographic or certificate management units, some duties and tasks are required of both certificate holding offices and geographic units.

- a. Repair Station Surveillance. All FAR Part 145 repair stations are required to be certificated by the district office within whose boundaries they are located. All certificate management responsibilities for repair stations including surveillance of maintenance performed under FAR Section 145.2, rests with the assigned FAR Part 145 PI's. Surveillance of aircraft maintenance performed by repair stations for FAR Parts 121 and 135 major air carriers with a continuous airworthiness maintenance program should be performed by geographic inspectors, since they serve as an extension of FAR Parts 121 and 135 air carrier PI's. All geographic surveillance should be coordinated with the FAR Part 145 repair station PI's to avoid duplication of effort.
- b. Training Center Surveillance. The surveillance at training centers NOT utilizing an Aircrew Designated Examiner (ADE) program is the responsibility of the district office having geographic responsibility where the center is located. The surveillance of training centers utilizing an ADE program is the responsibility of the CHDO. The district offices should make every possible effort to accommodate work requests received from outside the respective district related to work activity generated by personnel designated under FAR 183.
- c. Contract Maintenance. Contract maintenance performed within the CHDO boundaries will be monitored by the PI's assigned to the certificate. Geographic inspectors will conduct surveillance of contract maintenance performed within the local office boundaries on operators whose certificates are held by another office.
- d. PTRS Data Entry. Entry and recording of PTRS surveillance results and related data are the cornerstone of the Flight Standards surveillance system. A surveillance or inspection task is

not complete until an appropriate report and record of that surveillance task is made. Accordingly, all entries into the PTRS subsystem documenting a surveillance activity will normally be made within 5 days.

15. **DIRECTIVE FEEDBACK.** All AFS employees are encouraged to identify the need for policy and procedural guidance that will ensure efficient work accomplishment. If you have noted a deficiency, clarification, or improvement that may be needed in this directive, please use the attached FAA Form 1320-19, Directive Feedback Information, to submit your comments to the Administrative Management Branch, AFS-13. If an interpretation is urgently needed, you may call the originating office for guidance, but you should follow-up with submission of the FAA Form 1320-19.



Thomas C. Accardi  
Director, Flight Standards Service



US Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

### Directive Feedback Information

Please submit any written comments or recommendations for improving this directive, or suggest new items or subjects to be added to it. Also, if you find an error, please tell us about it.

Subject: Order \_\_\_\_\_

To: Directive Management Officer, \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please check all appropriate line items)*

An error (procedural or typographical) has been noted in paragraph \_\_\_\_\_ on page \_\_\_\_\_.

Recommend paragraph \_\_\_\_\_ on page \_\_\_\_\_ be changed as follows:  
*(attach separate sheet if necessary)*

In a future change to this directive, please include coverage on the following subject  
*(briefly describe what you want added):*

Other comments:

I would like to discuss the above. Please contact me.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

FTS Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Routing Symbol: \_\_\_\_\_