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INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION



VOLCANIC ASH CONTINGENCY PLAN
-
EUR AND NAT REGIONS

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FOREWORD

Within and adjacent to the North Atlantic (NAT) and European (EUR) Regions there are areas of volcanic activity which are likely to affect flight in the NAT and EUR Regions. This plan sets out standardised guidelines for the alerting of aircraft when eruptions occur, and procedures to be followed.

Volcanic ash may be a hazard for flight operations. Recent encounters with volcanic ash have resulted in one or more of the following and other problems:

- Engine failures and malfunctions
- Subsequent failure of electrical, pneumatical and hydraulic systems
- Blocking of sensors, resulting inter alia in erroneous airspeed indications
- Smoke, dust and/or chemical pollution of cabin air; resulting in the need for aircrews to use oxygen masks
- Communication problems
- Loss of visibility through cockpit windows

Regulatory authorities of State of the Operator¹, or State of Registry² as appropriate, should therefore prescribe appropriate operational procedures for flight crew to be followed in case of operation in or near airspaces that are contaminated by volcanic ash. Operators are required by ICAO Annex 6 to assess the risk of operation in volcanic ash and to implement appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with their Safety Management System as approved by the State of the Operator/Registry as appropriate.

It should be noted that this document is an Air Traffic Management (ATM) contingency plan including its interfaces with supporting services such as Aeronautical Information Service (AIS) and Meteorological (MET) and that the Plan therefore primarily addresses the Provider States³. Where distinct actions by the Meteorological Watch Offices (MWOs) are described, these are additional procedures to be considered by MWOs. Where actions by Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAACs) and operators are described, these are for clarification only.

Volcanic Ash can also affect the operation of aircraft on aerodromes. In extreme cases, aerodromes might no longer be available for operation at all, resulting in repercussions on the ATM system; e.g. diversions, revised traffic flows, etc.

These suggested procedures are not intended to establish or confirm a safe level of ash concentration. Values have been agreed to depict an area of ash concentration as low, medium or high. Operation through any area where volcanic ash is forecast is at the discretion of the operator.

NOTE All modeled ash concentrations are subject to a level of uncertainty relative to errors in the estimation of the eruption strength.

¹ The term “State of the Operator” refers to the role of a Contracting State as the regulatory authority with regard to aircraft operators having been issued an Aircraft Operator’s Certificate (AOC) by that State.

² The term “State of Registry” refers to the State on whose register the aircraft is entered.

³ The term “Provider State” refers to the role of a Contracting State as responsible for the provision of air navigation services within airspace over its territory and, as agreed by Regional Air Navigation Meeting, within defined airspace over the High Seas.

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Considering that a commercial aircraft will travel about 150 km (80 NM) in 10 minutes and that volcanic ash can rise to flight levels commonly used by turbine-engine aeroplanes in half that time, timely response to reports of volcanic ash is essential.

It is imperative that information on the volcanic activity is disseminated as soon as possible. In order to assist staff in expediting the process of originating and issuing relevant messages (SIGMET, NOTAM, and ASHTAM), a series of templates should be available for different stages of the volcanic activity. Examples of SIGMET, NOTAM and ASHTAM announcing operational measures and volcanic activities in the different stages and are contained in Appendix I. ASHTAM will not be promulgated by service providers in the NAT Region.

A list of ICAO registered volcanoes should be available at the international NOTAM office with volcano name, number and nominal position.

In order to ensure the smooth implementation of the Contingency Plan in case of an actual volcanic eruption, annual VOLCEX exercises should be conducted.

Terminology

Area of Low Contamination: An airspace of defined dimensions where volcanic ash may be encountered at concentrations equal to or less than $2 \times 10^{-3} \text{ g/m}^3$.

Area of Medium Contamination: An airspace of defined dimensions where volcanic ash may be encountered at concentrations greater than $2 \times 10^{-3} \text{ g/m}^3$, but less than $4 \times 10^{-3} \text{ g/m}^3$.

Area of High Contamination: An airspace of defined dimensions where volcanic ash may be encountered at concentrations equal to or greater than $4 \times 10^{-3} \text{ g/m}^3$, or areas of contaminated airspace where no ash concentration guidance is available.

It should be noted that “defined dimensions” refers to horizontal and vertical limits.

The response to a volcanic event that affects air traffic has been divided into three distinct phases as described briefly below. Volcanic activity at many locations is continuously monitored by the scientific community. Furthermore, flight crew are required to report observations of significant volcanic activity by means of a Special Air Report (AIREP). Arrangements are in place to ensure that such information is transferred without undue delay to the appropriate aeronautical institutions responsible for subsequent action.

ALERTING PHASE The initial response, “raising the alert”, commences when a volcanic eruption is expected. Alerting information will be provided by SIGMET, NOTAM or ASHTAM as appropriate and disseminated to affected aircraft in flight by the most expeditious means. In addition to the normal distribution list, the NOTAM/ASHTAM will be addressed to meteorological/volcanological agencies.

If it is considered that the event could pose a hazard to aviation, a Danger Area⁴ will be declared by NOTAM around the volcanic source. Normally, clearances will not be issued through the Danger Area.

⁴ Wherever this document discusses the possible establishment of Danger Areas, States are not prevented from establishing Restricted or Prohibited Areas over the sovereign territory of the State if considered necessary by the State concerned.

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- REACTIVE PHASE** The Reactive Phase commences at the outbreak of the volcanic eruption and entrance of volcanic ash into the atmosphere and mainly pertains to aircraft in flight. A “Start of Eruption SIGMET” will be issued and a Danger Area will be declared by NOTAM. Normally, clearances will not be issued through the Danger Area.
- PROACTIVE PHASE** The Proactive Phase commences with the issuance of the first Volcanic Ash Advisory (VAA) and Volcanic Ash Graphic (VAG) after completion of reactive responses. Supplementary modelled ash concentration charts may be available. The volcanic ash forecasts up to T+18 hours are to be used to prepare SIGMET. SIGMET shall be issued as soon as practicable but not more than 12 hours before the commencement of the period of validity, and shall be valid for up to 6 hours. The T+12 hours and T+18 hours (and further into the future, if available) volcanic ash forecasts are to be used to prepare NOTAM/ASHTAM. Significant changes may result in a reversion to a temporary Reactive Phase situation and unscheduled issuance of VAA, VAG and ash concentration charts, SIGMET and NOTAM/ASHTAM. As appropriate, Danger Areas will be notified via NOTAM.

Note that where SIGMET and NOTAM are mentioned in this document, volcanic ash SIGMET and volcanic ash NOTAM are being referred to.

This document pays due respect to Standards and Recommended Practices in ICAO Annexes, WMO procedures, and guidance material contained in ICAO documents, including, but not limited to, the following:

ICAO Annex 3 – *Meteorological Services for International Air Navigation*; ICAO Annex 11 – *Air Traffic Services*; ICAO Annex 15 - *Aeronautical Information Services*; ICAO Doc 4444 – *Procedures for Air Navigation Services – Air Traffic Management*; ICAO Doc 8126 – *Aeronautical Information Services Manual*; ICAO Doc 8896 – *Manual of Aeronautical Meteorological Practice*; ICAO Doc 9691 – *Manual on Volcanic Ash, Radioactive Material and Toxic Chemical Clouds*; ICAO Doc 9766 – *Handbook on the International Airways Volcanic Watch*; ICAO Doc 9859 – *Safety Management Manual*; ICAO EUR Doc 014 – *EUR SIGMET and AIRMET Guide*; and WMO No.386 Volume I (*Manual of Global Telecommunications System*) Part II (*Operational Procedures for the Global Telecommunications System*).

1. ALERTING PHASE

1.1 This phase is characterised by a limited availability of information on the extent and severity of the volcanic event. The purpose of this phase is to ensure the safety of aircraft in flight and to promulgate information as a matter of urgency. Regardless of the extent of information available the Alerting Phase actions should be carried out for every event.

1.2 ORIGINATING ACC ACTIONS (eruption in its own flight information region)

1.2.1 In the event of significant pre-eruption volcanic activity, a volcanic eruption occurring, or a volcanic ash cloud being reported which could pose a hazard to aviation, an Area Control Centre (ACC), on receiving information of such an occurrence, should carry out the following:

- a) Define an initial Danger Area in accordance with established procedures. If no such procedures have been established, the danger area should be defined as a circle with a radius of 222 km (120 NM). If the eruption has not commenced or if no information on upper winds is available, the circle should be centred on the estimated location of the volcanic activity. If the eruption has started and predicted upper wind information is available, the circle should be centred 111 km (60 NM) downwind from the volcano whilst enclosing it. The purpose of this initial Danger Area is to ensure safety of flight in the absence of any prediction from a competent authority of the extent of contamination.
- b) Advise the associated Meteorological Watch Office (MWO) and the appropriate VAAC (unless the initial notification originated from either of these entities). The VAAC will then inform the appropriate Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM) units.
- c) Alert flights already within the Danger Area and offer assistance to enable aircraft to exit the area in the most expeditious and appropriate manner. Aircraft that are close to the Danger Area should be offered assistance to keep clear of the area. Tactically re-clear flights which would penetrate the Danger Area onto routes that will keep them clear. The ACC should immediately notify other affected ACC's of the event and the location and dimensions of the Danger Area. It should also negotiate any re-routings necessary for flights already coordinated but still within adjacent flight information regions (FIRs). It is also expected that adjacent ACCs will be asked to reroute flights not yet coordinated to keep them clear of the Danger Area.
- d) Ensure that a NOTAM/ASHTAM is originated. This must provide as precise information as is available regarding the activity of the volcano. The name (where applicable), reference number and position of the volcano should be included along with the date and time of the start of the eruption (if appropriate). It is imperative that this information is issued by the international NOTAM office and disseminated as soon as possible.
- e) In order to assist staff in expediting the process of composing the NOTAM/ASHTAM, a series of templates should be available for this stage of the volcanic activity. Example NOTAM and ASHTAM are provided in Appendix I.

1.2.2 In addition to sending the NOTAM/ASHTAM and any subsequent NOTAM/ASHTAM to the normal distribution list, it will be sent to the relevant

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meteorological agencies after adding the appropriate World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) header. Example NOTAM and ASHTAM are provided in Appendix I.

1.3 ADJACENT ACC ACTIONS

1.3.1 During the Alerting Phase aircraft should be tactically rerouted to avoid the Danger Area. Any ash contamination should be contained within a limited area and disruption to traffic should not be excessive. Adjacent ACCs should take the following action to assist:

- a) When advised, re-clear flights to which services are being provided and which will be affected by the Danger Area.
- b) Unless otherwise instructed, continue normal operations except:
 - i) if one or more routes are affected by the Danger Area, stop clearing aircraft on these routes and take steps to reroute onto routes clear of the Danger Area; and
 - ii) initiate a running plot of the affected area.

1.4 ATFM UNIT ACTION

1.4.1 The ATFM unit and the VAAC will determine how their initial communications will take place on the basis of bilateral agreements. Upon reception of preliminary information on volcanic activity from the VAAC, the ATFM unit should initiate actions in accordance with its procedures to ensure exchange of information between Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSP), MWOs, VAACs and aircraft operators concerned.

2. REACTIVE PHASE

2.1 This phase commences at the outbreak of volcanic eruption. Major activities of the Reactive Phase are: Issuance of an eruption commenced SIGMET, eruption commenced NOTAM/ASHTAM and rerouting of airborne traffic. As appropriate, Danger Areas will be notified via NOTAM. This phase will last until such time as the Proactive Phase can be activated.

2.2 ORIGINATING ACC ACTIONS (eruption in its own FIR)

2.2.1 The ACC providing services in the FIR within which the volcanic eruption takes place should inform flights about the existence, extent and forecast movement of volcanic ash and provide information useful for the safe conduct of flights.

2.2.2 Rerouting of traffic commences immediately or may be in progress if the alerting time has been sufficient to facilitate activation of the Alerting Phase. The ACC should assist in rerouting aircraft around the Danger Area as expeditiously as possible. Adjacent ACCs should also take the Danger Area into account and give similar assistance to aircraft as early as possible.

2.2.3 During this phase the ACC should:

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- a) Maintain close liaison with its associated MWO. The MWO should issue a SIGMET message on the extent and forecast movement of the ash cloud based on appropriate sources of information.
- b) Based on these forecasts and in cooperation with the adjacent ACCs, ATFM measures should be devised and updated when necessary to enable aircraft to remain clear of Danger Areas.
- c) Ensure a NOTAM is originated to define a Danger Area.
- d) Ensure that reported differences between published information and observations (pilot reports, airborne measurements, etc.) are forwarded as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities.
- e) Should significant reductions in intensity of volcanic activity take place during this phase and the airspace no longer is contaminated by volcanic ash, a NOTAMC cancelling the last active NOTAM shall be issued stating the cause for cancellation; new ASHTAM should be promulgated to update the situation. Otherwise, begin planning for the Proactive Phase in conjunction with the appropriate ATFM unit and the affected ACCs.

2.3 ADJACENT ACC ACTIONS

2.3.1 During the Reactive Phase adjacent ACCs should take the following actions:

- a) Maintain close liaison with the appropriate ATFM unit and the originating ACC to design, implement and keep up to date ATFM measures which will enable aircraft to remain clear of Danger Areas.
- b) In the event that tactical measures additional to those issued by the appropriate ATFM unit are required, the adjacent ACC should, in cooperation with the originating ACC, impose such measures. Details are included in the ATFM Procedures section of this document.
- c) Maintain a running plot of the affected area.
- d) Begin planning for the Proactive Phase in conjunction with the appropriate ATFM unit and ACCs concerned.

2.4 ATFM UNIT ACTIONS

2.4.1 During the Reactive Phase, depending on the impact of the volcanic ash, the appropriate ATFM unit should organise the exchange of latest information on the developments with the VAAC, ANSPs, and MWOs and operators concerned.

3. PROACTIVE PHASE

3.1 The Proactive Phase commences with the issuance of the first VAA/VAG by the VAAC after completion of the reactive responses. The VAA/VAG will contain forecasts of the expected vertical and horizontal extent of the volcanic ash cloud, and its expected movement, at six-hourly time-steps for the period T+0 to T+18 hours. In addition, the meteorological office co-located with the VAAC will, where feasible, issue ash concentration forecasts to supplement the VAA/VAG information, at six-hourly intervals with a nominal validity time of 0000Z, 0600Z, 1200Z and 1800Z which will define Areas of Low, Medium and High Contamination.

3.2 Following the Reactive Phase, the VAA/VAG and (where available) ash concentration forecasts should be used to define airspace volumes encompassing the furthest extent of contamination predicted for that period. These volumes should be used to:

- a) Publish NOTAM indicating the extent of Danger Areas, indicating which areas of contamination are included therein;
- b) Issue SIGMET warning of potential hazard from areas of volcanic ash contamination;
- c) Publish NOTAM to separately indicate the extent of Areas of Medium Contamination if not included in a Danger Area; and
- d) Apply appropriate ATFM measures.

3.3 Longer term forecasts (i.e. beyond T+6 hours) should be used to generate NOTAM in order to ensure that adequate information is available to support flight planning. These messages should differentiate between levels of contamination.

3.4 Operators should use the information published regarding Areas of Low, Medium and High Contamination to plan their flights in accordance with their regulatory requirements and the service that will be provided in the airspace concerned. Operators should be aware that, depending on the State concerned, Danger Areas may be established to contain an Area of High Contamination, Areas of Medium/High Contamination, or Areas of Low/Medium/High Contamination.

3.5 The volcanic ash may affect any combination of airspace; therefore, it is impossible to prescribe measures to be taken for any particular situation. Nor is it possible to detail the actions to be taken by any particular ACC. The following guidance may prove useful during the Proactive Phase but should not be considered mandatory:

- a) ACCs affected by the movement of the ash should ensure that NOTAM/ASHTAM continue to be originated at appropriate intervals. ACCs concerned and the appropriate ATFM unit should continue to publish details on measures taken.
- b) Depending on the impact of the volcanic ash, the appropriate ATFM unit may take the initiative to organise teleconferences to exchange latest information on the developments with the VAACs, ANSPs and MWO's and operators concerned.
- c) During this phase the VAAC should endeavour to assess the vertical extent of the ash contamination and provide appropriate VAA/VAG to define the contaminated airspace as accurately as possible. For the purpose of flight

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planning, operators should treat the horizontal and vertical limits of the Danger Area to be over-flown as they would mountainous terrain. Operators are cautioned regarding the risk of cabin depressurisation or engine failure resulting in the inability to maintain level flight above the Danger Area, especially where Extended Twin Operations (ETOPS) aircraft are involved.

- d) Any reported differences between published information and observations (pilot reports, airborne measurements, etc.) should be forwarded as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities; and
- e) When the airspace is no longer contaminated by volcanic ash, a NOTAMC cancelling the active NOTAM shall be promulgated. New ASHTAM should be promulgated to update the situation.

4. ATFM PROCEDURES

4.1 Depending on the impact of the volcanic ash, the appropriate ATFM unit should organize the exchange of latest information on the developments with the VAACs, ANSPs and MWOs and operators concerned.

4.2 The ATFM unit will apply ATFM measures on request of the ANSPs concerned. The measures should be reviewed and updated in accordance with updated information. Operators should also be advised to maintain watch for NOTAM/ASHTAM and SIGMET for the area.

NOTE Procedures applicable to the EUROCONTROL Central Flow Management Unit (CFMU) area of responsibility are contained in the EUROCONTROL – Basic CFMU Handbook. This document is available at http://www.cfm.eurocontrol.int/cfm/public/standard_page/library_index.html

5. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL PROCEDURES⁵

5.1 If volcanic ash is reported or forecast in the FIR for which the ACC is responsible, the following procedures should be followed:

- a) Relay all available information immediately to pilots whose aircraft could be affected to ensure that they are aware of the horizontal and vertical extent of the ash contamination;
- b) If requested, suggest appropriate rerouting to assist flights to avoid areas of known or forecast ash contamination;

⁵ This information is adapted from the *Manual on Volcanic Ash, Radioactive Material and Toxic Chemical Clouds* (Doc 9691). Refer to this document for full details.

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- c) When appropriate, remind pilots that volcanic ash may not be detected by ATC radar systems;
- d) If modelled ash concentration charts are available showing Areas of Low, Medium and High Contamination, the Provider State may establish Danger Areas. Depending on the State concerned, the Danger Areas will be established to contain an Area of High Contamination, Areas of Medium/High Contamination, or Areas of Low/Medium/High Contamination;
- e) In the absence of ash concentration guidance, the entire area of forecast volcanic ash should be considered as an Area of High Contamination, for the purposes of applying ATC procedures, until ash concentration guidance is available;
- f) Normally, ATC should not provide a clearance for an aircraft to enter or operate within a Danger Area. Assistance to enable an aircraft to exit a Danger Area in the most expeditious and appropriate manner should be provided;
- g) In the NAT Region, so far as practicable, Organized Tracks will not be established through a Danger Area. If Organized Tracks are established through contaminated areas, a note will be included on the NAT Track Message to identify such tracks; and
- h) If the ACC has been advised by an aircraft that it has entered an area of ash contamination and indicates that a distress situation exists:
 - i) consider the aircraft to be in an emergency situation;
 - ii) do not initiate any climb clearances to turbine-powered aircraft until the aircraft has exited the area of ash contamination; and
 - iii) do not attempt to provide vectors without pilot concurrence.

5.2 Experience has shown that the recommended escape manoeuvre for an aircraft which has encountered volcanic ash is to reverse its course and begin a descent (if terrain permits). However, the final responsibility for this decision rests with the pilot.

6. GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATS CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR VOLCANIC ASH⁶

6.1 In a contingency plan relating to volcanic ash certain steps need to be taken to provide a coordinated and controlled response for dealing with an event of this nature. Responsibilities should be clearly defined for the manager in charge, supervisors and Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs). The plan should also identify the officials who need to be contacted, the type of messages that are to be created, the proper distribution of the messages and how to conduct business.

6.2 ATCOs need to be trained and be made aware of the potential effects if aircraft encounter unsafe levels of volcanic ash.

6.3 Some particular points of guidance are as follows:

⁶ This information is adapted from the *Manual on Volcanic Ash, Radioactive Material and Toxic Chemical Clouds* (Doc 9691). Refer to this document for full details.

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- a) Volcanic ash contamination may extend for hundreds of miles horizontally and reach the stratosphere vertically
- b) Volcanic ash may block the pitot-static system of an aircraft, resulting in unreliable airspeed indications;
- c) Braking conditions at airports where volcanic ash has recently been deposited on the runway will affect the braking ability of the aircraft. This is more pronounced on runways contaminated with wet ash. Pilots and ATCOs should be aware of the consequences of volcanic ash being ingested into the engines during landing and taxiing. For departure it is recommended that pilots avoid operating in visible airborne ash; instead they should allow sufficient time for the particles to settle before initiating a take-off roll, in order to avoid ingestion of ash particles into the engine. In addition, the movement area to be used should be carefully swept before any engine is started;
- d) Volcanic ash may result in the failure or power loss of one or all engines of an aeroplane; and
- e) Airports might have to be declared unsafe for flight operations. This might have consequences for the ATM system.

6.4 The ACC in conjunction with ATFM units serves as the critical communication link between the pilot, dispatcher and meteorologists during a volcanic eruption. During episodes of volcanic ash contamination within the FIR, the ACC has two major communication roles. First and of greatest importance is its ability to communicate directly with aircraft en route which may encounter the ash. Based on the information provided in the volcanic ash SIGMET and VAAs and working with MWO, the ATCOs should be able to advise the pilot of which flight levels are affected by the ash and the projected trajectory and drift of the contamination. Through the use of radio communication, ACCs have the capability to coordinate with the pilot alternative routes which would keep the aircraft away from the volcanic ash.

6.5 Similarly, through the origination of a NOTAM/ASHTAM for volcanic activity the ACC can disseminate information on the status and activity of a volcano even for pre-eruption increases in volcanic activity. NOTAM/ASHTAM and SIGMET together with AIREPs are critical to dispatchers for flight planning purposes. Operators need as much advance notification as possible on the status of a volcano for strategic planning of flights and the safety of the flying public. Dispatchers need to be in communication with pilots en route so that a coordinated decision can be made between the pilot, the dispatcher and ATC regarding alternative routes that are available. The ACC should advise the ATFM unit concerning the availability of alternative routes. It cannot be presumed, however, that an aircraft which is projected to encounter ash will be provided with the most desirable route to avoid the contamination. Other considerations have to be taken into account such as existing traffic levels on other routes and the amount of fuel reserve available for flights which may have to be diverted to other routes to allow for the affected aircraft to divert.

6.6 The NOTAM/ASHTAM for volcanic activity provide information on the status of activity of a volcano when a change in its activity is, or is expected to be, of operational significance. They are originated by the ACC and issued through the respective international NOTAM office based on the information received from any one of the observing sources and/or advisory information provided by the associated VAAC. In addition to providing the status of activity of a volcano, the NOTAM/ASHTAM also provides information on the location, extent and movement of the ash contamination and the air routes and flight levels affected. NOTAM can also be used to limit access to the airspace affected by the volcanic

ash. Complete guidance on the issuance of NOTAM and ASHTAM is provided in Annex 15 — *Aeronautical Information Services*. Included in Annex 15 is a volcano level of activity colour code chart. The colour code chart alert may be used to provide information on the status of the volcano, with “red” being the most severe, i.e. volcanic eruption in progress with an ash column/cloud reported above flight level 250, and “green” at the other extreme being volcanic activity considered to have ceased and volcano reverted to its normal pre-eruption state. It is very important that NOTAM for volcanic ash be cancelled and ASHTAM be updated as soon as the volcano has reverted to its normal pre-eruption status, no further eruptions are expected by volcanologists and no ash is detectable or reported from the FIR concerned.

6.7 It is essential that the procedures to be followed by ACC personnel, including supporting services such as MET, AIS and ATFM should follow during a volcanic eruption/ash cloud event described in the foregoing paragraphs are translated into local staff instructions (adjusted as necessary to take account of local circumstances). It is also essential that these procedures/instructions form part of the basic training for all ATS, AIS, ATFM and MET personnel whose jobs would require them to take action in accordance with the procedures. Background information to assist the ACC or Flight Information Centre (FIC) in maintaining an awareness of the status of activity of volcanoes in their FIR(s) is provided in the monthly Scientific Event Alert Network Bulletin published by the United States Smithsonian Institution and sent free of charge to ACCs/FICs requesting it.

APPENDIX A

ANTICIPATED PILOT ISSUES WHEN ENCOUNTERING VOLCANIC ASH

1. ATCOs should be aware that flight crews will be immediately dealing with some or all of the following issues when they encounter volcanic ash:
 - a) Smoke or dust appearing in the cockpit which may prompt the flight crew to don oxygen masks (could interfere with the clarity of voice communications);
 - b) Acrid odour similar to electrical smoke;
 - c) Multiple engine malfunctions, such as stalls, increasing Exhaust Gas Temperature (EGT), torching, flameout, and thrust loss causing an immediate departure from assigned altitude;
 - d) On engine restart attempts, engines may accelerate to idle very slowly, especially at high altitudes (could result in inability to maintain altitude or Mach number);
 - e) At night, St. Elmo's fire/static discharges may be observed around the windshield, accompanied by a bright orange glow in the engine inlet(s);
 - f) Possible loss of visibility due to cockpit windows becoming cracked or discoloured, due to the sandblast effect of the ash;
 - g) Cockpit windows could be rendered completely opaque; and/or
 - h) Sharp distinct shadows cast by landing lights as compared to the diffused shadows observed in clouds (this affects visual perception of objects outside the aircraft).
 2. Simultaneously, ATC can expect pilots to be executing contingency procedures. This may include a possible course reversal and/or an emergency descent.
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APPENDIX B

**ACTION TAKEN BY METEOROLOGICAL WATCH OFFICES (MWO) IN THE
EVENT OF A VOLCANIC ERUPTION**

1. On receipt of information of a volcanic eruption and/or the existence of volcanic ash, the MWO will:
 - a) Notify, if necessary, the VAAC designated to provide VAA/VAG for the FIR for which the MWO is responsible that a volcanic eruption and/or ash has been reported. In the event that the MWO becomes aware, from a source other than an ACC, of the occurrence of pre-eruption activity, a volcanic eruption or ash from any other source, the information will be passed with all available relevant details on the extent, forecast movement and concentration of volcanic ash immediately to the ACC and to the designated VAAC;
 - b) Reported differences between ash encounters by aircraft and the information published in VAA/VAG, SIGMET or NOTAM/ASHTAM received by an ACC shall be made available as soon as possible to the respective MWO, preferably in the form of an AIREP. The MWO will relay the information to the respective originators of the published information;
 - c) Notify adjacent MWOs designated to provide SIGMET that a volcanic eruption and/or ash cloud has been reported, provide available relevant details on the extent, forecast movement and (if known) concentration of volcanic ash. In the event that any other MWO becomes aware of the occurrence of volcanic ash cloud from any source other than the VAAC, the information should be passed immediately to the VAAC and any adjacent MWO(s) downstream of the moving ash cloud;
 - d) As soon as practicable, advise the ACC and the VAAC whether or not the volcanic ash is identifiable from satellite images/data, ground based or airborne measurements or other relevant sources;
 - e) Issue SIGMET relating to the horizontal and vertical extent of volcanic ash cloud and its expected movement for a validity period of up to 6 hours. The SIGMET shall include an observed (or forecast) position of the ash cloud at the *start* of the period of validity, and a forecast position at the *end* of the period of validity. The SIGMET should be based on the advisory information provided by the VAAC. Include in the SIGMET distribution list the three Regional OPMET Centres (ROC) in London, Toulouse and Vienna. As well as inter-regional distribution, the ROCs will ensure dissemination of the SIGMET to all the VAACs, the London World Area Forecast Centre (WAFC) and the three Regional OPMET Data Banks (RODB);
 - f) provide information to assist with the origination of NOTAM by ACCs and maintain continuous coordination with ACCs, adjacent MWOs and the VAAC concerned to ensure consistency in the issuance and content of SIGMET and NOTAM/ASHTAM; and
 - g) provide, if possible, regular volcanic briefings, based on the latest available ash observations and forecasts, to ACCs, ATFM units, Airport Operators and aircraft operators concerned, giving an outlook for beyond T+12 hours.
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APPENDIX C

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY THE VOLCANIC ASH ADVISORY CENTRE (VAAC)
IN THE EVENT OF A VOLCANIC ERUPTION**

1. On receipt of information from a MWO or any other source, of significant pre-eruptive/eruption activity and/or a volcanic ash cloud observed, the VAAC should:

- a) Initiate the volcanic ash computer trajectory/dispersal model in order to provide advisory information on volcanic ash trajectory to MWOs, ACCs, ATFM units and operators concerned;
 - b) Review satellite images/data and any available pilot reports of the area for the time of the event to ascertain whether a volcanic ash cloud is identifiable and, if so, its extent and movement;
 - c) Inform the appropriate ATFM unit of the volcanic ash activity;
 - d) Prepare and issue advisories on the extent, and forecast trajectory, of the volcanic ash contamination in message format for transmission to the MWOs, ACCs, ATFM units and operators concerned in the VAAC area of responsibility, and to the three Regional OPMET Centres (ROC) in London, Toulouse and Vienna. As well as inter-regional distribution, the ROCs will ensure dissemination of the advisory to all the VAACs, the London World Area Forecast Centre (WAFC), and the three Regional OPMET Data Banks (RODB);
 - e) Monitor subsequent satellite information or other available observations to assist in tracking the movement of the volcanic ash;
 - f) Continue to issue advisory information (i.e. VAA/VAG), for validity periods T+0, T+6, T+12 and T+18 hours after data time, to MWOs, ACCs, ATFM units and operators concerned at least at 6 hour intervals, and preferably more frequently, until such time as it is considered that the volcanic ash is no longer identifiable from satellite data, no further reports of volcanic ash are received from the area and no further eruptions of the volcano are reported; and
 - g) Maintain regular contact with other VAACs and meteorological offices concerned, and, as necessary, the Smithsonian Institute Global Volcanism Network, in order to keep up to date on the activity status of volcanoes in the VAAC area of responsibility.
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APPENDIX D

**PROCEDURES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF MODELLED ASH
CONCENTRATION CHARTS**

1. The following procedures are to be applied by the meteorological office of a Provider State, having accepted, by regional air navigation agreement, the responsibility for providing a VAAC within the framework of the International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW).
 2. All VAA and VAG information issued by a meteorological office under designation as a VAAC within the framework of the IAVW shall be prepared in accordance with ICAO provisions.
 3. Additionally, where feasible, the meteorological office may issue modelled ash concentration charts and corresponding coordinate data files at 6-hourly intervals showing the different ash concentrations for the validity periods T+0, T+6, T+12 and T+18 hours after data time. These charts will show forecast ash distribution in terms of Areas of Low, Medium and High Contamination and be published at the same time, and with the same validity periods, as the VAA/VAG described above. Updated charts and data files should be distributed prior to the end of the validity time of those previously distributed.
 4. These data may be used by Provider States to prepare SIGMET, NOTAM/ASHTAM and to establish Danger Areas as appropriate.
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APPENDIX E

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS BY STATES OF THE OPERATOR/REGISTRY WITH REGARDS TO AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS IN THE EVENT OF A VOLCANIC ERUPTION

Safety Risk Assessments For Flights In Airspace Proximate To Volcanic Ash

1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is recommended that States of the Operator/Registry as appropriate which intend to allow operators under their jurisdiction to operate in areas of volcanic ash contamination consider requiring operators to carry out a safety risk assessment prior to carrying out such operations.
- 1.2 Safety risk assessments should be completed prior to planned operations in airspace or to/from aerodromes which may be contaminated by volcanic ash.

2 Applicability

- 2.1 All operators conducting flights in airspace and/or to/from aerodromes which could be affected by volcanic ash.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 In accordance with ICAO Annex 6, Chapter 3, paragraph 3.3- Safety Management, it is recommended that States of the Operator/Registry as appropriate require all operators, planning to operate in areas where the presence of volcanic ash is forecast, to carry out a safety risk assessment prior to planned operations. The safety risk assessment should include a requirement for the operator to:
 - a) Conduct their own risk assessment and develop operational procedures to address any remaining risks;
 - b) Put in place appropriate maintenance ash damage inspections; and
 - c) Ensure that any ash related incidents are reported by AIREP and followed up by a Volcanic Activity Report (VAR).
 - 3.2 Guidance in the preparation of such a safety risk assessment is provided in Appendix F of this document.
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APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The safety risk assessment process is described in the *Safety Management Manual* (Doc 9859). The process involves identifying the hazards associated with the activity (in this case airspace proximate to volcanic ash or flying to and from aerodromes affected by volcanic ash), considering the seriousness of the consequences of the hazard occurring (the severity), evaluating the likelihood or probability of it happening, deciding whether the consequent risk is acceptable and within the organisation's safety performance criteria (acceptability), and finally taking action to reduce the safety risk to an acceptable level (mitigation).

2 Hazard Identification

- 2.1 A hazard is any situation or condition that has the potential to cause adverse consequences. A suggested list of topics, that is not necessarily exhaustive, to be considered is attached at **Appendix G**

3 The Safety Risk Assessment

- 3.1 Risk is an assessment of the likelihood and the severity of adverse consequences resulting from a hazard.
- 3.2 To help an operator decide on the likelihood of a hazard causing harm, and to assist with possible mitigation of any perceived safety risk, all relevant stakeholders should be consulted.
- 3.3 The safety risk from each hazard should be assessed using a suitably calibrated safety risk assessment matrix. An example risk assessment matrix is given in *Safety Management Manual* (Doc 9859) but an alternative which aligns with an organisation's own Safety Management System (SMS) would be equally appropriate. The safety risk should be derived by considering the severity of the safety outcome arising from the hazard, together with the likelihood of the outcome.
- 3.4 The severity of any adverse consequences resulting from a particular hazard should be assessed using a suitably calibrated severity scale. Example scales are given in *Safety Management Manual* (Doc 9859) but an alternative, which aligns with an organisation's own SMS, would be equally appropriate. Note that, for any flight, the safety outcome of a volcanic ash encounter may be significant.

3.5 Risk Likelihood

- 3.5.1 The likelihood or probability of adverse consequences resulting from a particular hazard should then be assessed. The likelihood should be agreed using a suitably calibrated likelihood or probability scale. An example probability scale is given in *Safety Management Manual* (Doc 9859), but an alternative which aligns with an organisation's own SMS would be equally appropriate.
- 3.5.2 When assessing likelihood or probability the following factors should be taken into account:
- The degree of exposure to the hazard.

- Any historic incident or safety event data relating to the hazard. This can be derived from data from industry, regulators, other operators, Air Navigation Service Providers, internal reports etc.
 - The expert judgement of relevant stakeholders.
- 3.5.3 The results of the assessment should be recorded in a hazard log, sometimes referred to as a risk register. An example of a hazard log is at **Appendix H**.

3.6 Risk Tolerability

- 3.6.1 At this stage of the process the safety risks should be classified in a range from acceptable to unacceptable. A suitable set of definitions for Risk Classification is given in *Safety Management Manual* (Doc 9859).
- 3.6.2 Appropriate mitigations for each identified hazard should then be considered, recorded on the hazard log and implemented. Mitigations must be adopted in order to reduce the safety risks to an acceptable level, but additional mitigation wherever reasonably practicable should also be considered where this might reduce an already acceptable safety risk even further. Thus, the mitigation process should reduce the safety risk to be as low as reasonably practicable.
- 3.6.3 Not all hazards can be suitably mitigated in which case the operation should not proceed.

3.7 Mitigating Actions

- 3.7.1 Mitigating actions by themselves can introduce new hazards. Where an organisation has an effective SMS then procedures will exist for continual monitoring of hazard, risk and involvement of qualified personnel in accepting the mitigating actions or otherwise. Operators without an effective SMS should repeat the safety risk assessment following any mitigation process and at regular intervals as the circumstances on which the original assessment was predicated may have changed. This ensures ongoing safety management or monitoring.

3.8 Records

- 3.8.1 The results of the safety risk assessment should be documented and promulgated throughout the organisation and submitted to the operator's national safety authority. Actions should be completed and mitigations verified and supported by evidence prior to the start of operations.
- 3.8.2 Any assumptions should be clearly stated and the safety risk assessment reviewed at regular intervals to ensure the assumptions and decisions remain valid.
- 3.8.3 Any safety performance monitoring requirements should also be identified and undertaken through the organisation's safety management processes.
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APPENDIX G

**EXAMPLE TABLE OF CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNED OPERATIONS IN
AIRSPACE OR TO/FROM AERODROMES WHICH MAY BE CONTAMINATED
BY VOLCANIC ASH.**

Considerations	Guidance
Operator Procedures	
Type Certificate Holder Guidance	Operators must obtain advice from the Type Certificate Holder and engine manufacturer concerning both operations in potentially contaminated airspace and/or to/from aerodromes contaminated by volcanic ash, including subsequent maintenance action.
Guidance for Company Personnel	<p>Publish procedures for flight planning, operations and maintenance.</p> <p>Review of flight crew procedures for detection of volcanic ash and associated escape manoeuvres.</p> <p>Type Certificate Holder advice on operations to/from aerodromes contaminated by volcanic ash including performance.</p>
Flight Planning	These considerations will be applicable to all flights that plan to operate in airspace or to/from aerodromes which may be contaminated by volcanic ash.
NOTAM and ASHTAM	The operator must closely monitor NOTAM and ASHTAM to ensure that the latest information concerning volcanic ash is available to crews.
SIGMETs	The operator must closely monitor SIGMETs to ensure that the latest information concerning volcanic ash is available to crews.
Departure, Destination and any Alternates	Degree of contamination, additional performance, procedures and maintenance consideration.
Routing Policy	Shortest period in and over contaminated area.
Diversion Policy	<p>Maximum allowed distance from a suitable alternate.</p> <p>Availability of alternates outside contaminated area.</p> <p>Diversion policy after an ash encounter.</p>

G2
Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan – EUR and NAT Regions

Minimum Equipment List / Dispatch Deviation Guide	<p>Consider additional restrictions for dispatching aircraft:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • air conditioning packs; • engine bleeds; • air data computers; • standby instruments; • navigation systems; • Auxiliary Power Unit (APU); • Airborne Collision Avoidance System (ACAS); • Terrain Awareness Warning System (TAWS); • provision of crew oxygen; and • supplemental oxygen for passengers. <p>(This list is not necessarily exhaustive.)</p>
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Considerations	Guidance
Operator Procedures	
Provision of Enhanced Flight Watch	Timely information to and from crew of latest information.
Fuel Policy	Consideration to the carriage of extra fuel.

Considerations	Guidance
Crew Procedures	These considerations will be applicable to all flights that plan to operate in airspace or to/from aerodromes which may be contaminated by volcanic ash.
Pilot Reports	Requirements for reporting in the event of an airborne encounter. Post-flight reporting.
Mandatory Occurrence Reports	Reminder regarding the necessity for filing MORs following an encounter.
Standard Operating Procedures	<p>Review changes to normal and abnormal operating procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-flight planning; • operations to/from aerodromes contaminated with volcanic ash; • supplemental oxygen; • engine-out procedures; and • escape routes. <p>(This list is not necessarily exhaustive.)</p>

G3
Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan – EUR and NAT Regions

Technical Log	<p>Any actual or suspected volcanic ash encounter will require a tech log entry and appropriate maintenance action prior to subsequent flight.</p> <p>Penetration (detail and duration) of airspace or operations to/from aerodromes which may be contaminated by volcanic ash will require a tech log entry.</p>
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Considerations	Guidance
Maintenance Procedures	<p>Operators, who are operating in areas of ash contamination, are recommended to enhance vigilance during inspections and regular maintenance and potentially adjust their maintenance practices, based upon the observations, to prevent unscheduled maintenance. Observations should include signs of unusual or accelerated abrasions, corrosion and / or ash accumulation.</p> <p>Operator co-operation is requested in reporting to manufacturers and the relevant authorities their observations and experiences from operations in areas of ash contamination. If significant observations are discovered beyond normal variations currently known, manufacturers will share these observations, and any improved recommendations for maintenance practices, with all operators and the relevant authorities.</p>

Note: The above list is not necessarily exhaustive and operators must make their own assessments of the hazards on the specific routes they fly.

H1
Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan – EUR and NAT Regions

APPENDIX H

EXAMPLE OF A HAZARD LOG (RISK REGISTER)

HAZARD		Incident Sequence Description	Existing Controls	Outcome (Pre-Mitigation)			Additional Mitigation Required	Outcome (Post-Mitigation)			Actions and Owners	Monitoring and Review Requirements
No.	Description			Severity	Likelihood	Risk		Severity	Likelihood	Risk		

(additional rows as necessary)

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE SIGMET, NOTAM, ASHTAM

Guidance on WMO headers referred to in Alerting Phase, paragraph 1.2.2 refers can be found in WMO No.386 Volume I (*Manual of Global Telecommunications System*) Part II (*Operational Procedures for the Global Telecommunications System*)

NOTAM Offices are reminded that ASHTAM (or NOTAM for volcanic ash) should be distributed via AFTN to their associated MWO, the SADIS Gateway and all the VAACs, in accordance with guidelines contained in ICAO Doc 9766 Chapter 4 paragraph 4.3.

1. SIGMET

WVUK02 EGRR 180105
EGGX SIGMET 2 VALID 180105/180705 EGRR-
EGGX SHANWICK OCEANIC FIR VA ERUPTION MT KATLA PSN N6337
W01901 VA CLD OBS AT 0100Z N6100 W02730 - N6100 W02230 -
N5800 W01730 - N5630 W02000 FL200/350 MOV SE 35KT FCST
0705Z VA CLD APRX N5800 W02000 - N5730 W01200 - N5500
W00910 - N5430 W01530 - N5800 W02000=

Note: PSN replaces LOC as per Amendment 75 to Annex 3 (applicable 18 November 2010)

2. NOTAM alerting pre-eruptive activity

(A0777/10NOTAMN
Q) BIRD/QWWXX/IV/NBO/W/000/999/6337N01901WXXX
A) BIRD B) 1002260830 C) 1002261100 E) INCREASED
VOLCANIC ACTIVITY, POSSIBLY INDICATING IMMINENT ERUPTION,
REPORTED FOR VOLCANO KATLA 1702-03 6337.5N01901.5W
ICELAND-S. VOLCANIC ASHCLOUD IS EXPECTED TO REACH 50,000
FEET FEW MINUTES FROM START OF ERUPTION.AIRCRAFT ARE
REQUIRED TO FLIGHT PLAN TO REMAIN AT LEAST XXXNM CLEAR OF
VOLCANO AND MAINTAIN WATCH FOR NOTAM/SIGMET FOR AREA.
F) GND G) UNL)

Note: XXX is a distance established by the Provider State in accordance with paragraph 1.2.1 a)

3. NOTAM establishing Danger Area after initial eruption

(A0778/10 NOTAMR A0777/10
Q) BIRD/QWWXX/IV/NBO/W/000/999/6337N01901WXXX
A) BIRD
B) 1002260900 C) 1002261200
E) VOLCANIC ERUPTION REPORTED IN VOLCANO KATLA 1702-03
6337.5N01901.5W ICELAND-S. VOLCANIC ASHCLOUD REPORTED
REACHING FL500. AIRCRAFT ARE REQUIRED TO REMAIN AT LEAST
XXXNM CLEAR OF VOLCANO AND MAINTAIN WATCH FOR
NOTAM/SIGMET FOR BIRD AREA.
F) GND G) UNL)

I2
Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan – EUR and NAT Regions

Note: XXX is a distance established by the Provider State in accordance with paragraph 1.2.1 a)

4. NOTAM establishing Danger Area to include Area of High [or High/Medium or High/Medium/Low] Contamination

(A0503/10 NOTAMN
Q) EGGN/QWWXX/IV/NBO/AE/000/350
A) EGPX B) 1005182300 C) 1005190500
E) TEMPORARY DANGER AREA HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR
VOLCANIC ASH AREA OF HIGH CONTAMINATION IN AREA
5812N00611W 5718N00216W 5552N00426W 5629N00652W
F) SFC
G) FL350)

5. NOTAM to define Area of Medium Contamination for which a Danger Area has not been established

(A0207/10 NOTAMN
Q) EUEC/QWWXX/IV/AE/000/200
A) EIAA B) 1005190700 C) 1005191300
E) VOLCANIC ASH AREA OF MEDIUM CONTAMINATION FORECAST IN
AREA 5243N00853W 5330N00618W 5150N00829W
F) SFC
G) FL200)

6. ASHTAM alerting pre-eruptive activity

VALI0021 LIRR 01091410
ASHTAM 005/10
A) ROMA FIR B) 01091350 C) ETNA 101-06 D) 3744N01500E
E) YELLOW ALERT
J) VULCANOLOGICAL AGENCY

7. ASHTAM alerting eruptive activity

VALI0024 LIRR 01151800
ASHTAM 015/10
A) ROMA FIR B) 01151650 C) ETNA 101-06 D) 3744N01500E
E) RED ALERT F) AREA AFFECTED 3700N01500E 3900N01600E
3800N001700W SFC/35000FT G) NE H) ROUTES AFFECTED WILL
BE NOTIFIED BY ATC J) VULCANOLOGICAL AGENCY

8. ASHTAM alerting reduction in eruptive activity

VALI0035 LIRR 01300450
ASHTAM 025/10
A) ROMA FIR B) 01300350 C) ETNA 101-06 D) 3744N01500E
E) YELLOW ALERT FOLLOWING ORANGE J) VULCANOLOGICAL AGENCY

- END -