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NASA Policy Directive

NPD 7900.4C

Effective Date: April 08, 2009
Expiration Date: April 08, 2014

COMPLIANCE IS MANDATORY

[Printable Format \(PDF\)](#)

Request Notification of Change (NASA Only)

Subject: NASA Aircraft Operations Management

Responsible Office: Aircraft Management Division

1. POLICY

- a. This NASA Policy Directive (NPD) establishes policy for the management of NASA aircraft resources, aircraft operations, airworthiness, aviation safety, commercial aviation services, and related matters.
- b. All aircraft operations by or in support of NASA, including Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) operations, shall be conducted only for official purposes. Official purposes include the operation of Government aircraft for mission requirements and other official travel.
- c. All aircraft flights shall be duly authorized and accomplished in airworthy aircraft operated by qualified flight crews in accordance with approved NASA and Federal guidelines, regulations, and operational procedures.
- d. All aircraft flights with passengers embarked shall comply with all applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations for civil use.
- e. NASA-owned aircraft, including UAS, are Agency-wide resources available to support all NASA programs and missions. NASA-owned aircraft also are Federal resources and may be made available to other Federal agencies in support of their missions. The Agency shall efficiently and effectively utilize its aircraft resources to the maximum extent feasible. Cross-Center cooperation and utilization of aircraft resources is required.
- f. Policies and procedures for acquisition, review, approval, and implementation of all flight programs shall be established by NASA Centers that operate aircraft or acquire external aircraft services (both Government and commercial). Procedures shall be established at each Center and aircraft operations facility, including NASA Headquarters, to comply with NASA aircraft management policies as established in this NPD and in NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management.

g. All aviation operations acquired, conducted, or sponsored, including astronaut training, program support, security, research, or scientific projects that use aviation assets, are to be evaluated and approved by the NASA airworthiness and aircraft management organizations at the Center that is responsible for those projects. Prior to contract award for aviation services, the flight operations office at the NASA Center that manages the contract shall ensure that an approved Headquarters Aircraft Management Division (AMD) risk analysis review of the final candidates has been completed. The risk analysis review shall include a review of the terms of the contract, the risks to NASA, the hazards associated with the proposed flight operation, the airworthiness of the aircraft, and the capabilities of the contractor. The results of the risk analysis review shall be incorporated in the contractor selection process. At least one NASA flight operations officer shall be a member of the selection board or team. If the Center has no flight operations office, support from another NASA flight operations office shall be coordinated by Headquarters AMD and the NASA Inter-Center Aircraft Operations Panel (IAOP).

h. All NASA aircraft services contracts and agreements shall comply with NASA aircraft management policies established in this NPD and in NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management. With the exception of passenger transportation and flights for commercial purposes, which are defined by statute as civil use flights, aircraft operations conducted by or for NASA or sponsored by NASA shall be considered "public use" flights. NASA has the responsibility for safety and airworthiness oversight of such flights, both Government and commercially contracted. Advance coordination with the Center flight operations office or the Headquarters AMD is required.

i. All Centers conducting aircraft operations (and certain commercial aviation services) shall conduct an aviation safety review on a biennial basis utilizing the IAOP Review Program. The IAOP Review Program provides a peer review and objective management evaluation of the procedures and practices that are being used at each Center operating aircraft to ensure that safe and efficient aircraft operations are accomplished.

j. NASA shall take all necessary actions to prevent loss of life, personal injury, property loss, mission failure, or test failure.

2. APPLICABILITY

This NPD is applicable to NASA Headquarters and NASA Centers, including Component Facilities and Technical and Service Support Centers. This language applies to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, NASA contractors operating NASA aircraft, grantees operating NASA aircraft, and to partners under agreements such as memorandums of agreement or cooperative agreements only to the extent specified or referenced in the appropriate contracts, grants, or agreements. Any aircraft when owned, bailed, leased, loaned, chartered, rented, or operated under grant by NASA is considered a NASA aircraft.

3. AUTHORITY

42 U.S.C. § 2473(c)(1), Section 203(c)(1) of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, as amended.

4. APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

- a. 41 C.F.R. Part 102-33, Federal Management Regulation (FMR), Management of Government Aircraft.
- b. 41 C.F.R. Part 301-2, Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, General Rules [General Services Administration (GSA)].
- c. NASA FAR Supplement, Subpart 1847.2.
- d. OMB Circular A-126 (Revised), Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft.
- e. NPD 8700.1, NASA Policy for Safety and Mission Success.
- f. NPD 8710.2, NASA Safety and Health Program Policy.
- g. NPR 1800, NASA Occupational Health Program Procedures.
- h. NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management.
- i. NPR 8715.3, NASA General Safety Program Requirements.

5. RESPONSIBILITY

- a. The Assistant Administrator, Office of Infrastructure (OI), is responsible for ensuring that the Administrator is kept fully informed of significant matters relating to NASA aviation and for ensuring that the policies herein are in compliance with applicable Federal guidelines. The Assistant Administrator, OI, has the authority to establish policies for aircraft life-cycle management, including acquisition, utilization, operation, maintenance, modification, control, and disposition and to approve aircraft acquisition and transfers, designate aircraft usage classifications, review and concur on aircraft contracts, and assign aircraft to the appropriate Center. Assignment of aircraft to Centers is a joint responsibility between the Assistant Administrator, OI, and the Mission Directorate(s) requiring and funding the aircraft program(s).
- b. The Chief, Safety and Mission Assurance, is the focal point for aviation safety and is responsible for establishing aviation safety policy and overseeing its implementation through verification of effective aviation safety programs throughout the Agency.
- c. The Associate Administrators (AAs) of Mission Directorates are responsible for establishing and documenting aircraft mission requirements and funding to support those requirements. They shall coordinate with OI as early as possible in the planning process when establishing program or project plans that involve the acquisition, reassignment,

utilization, or disposition of an aircraft. With the support of the Headquarters AMD, the AA shall periodically review aircraft requirements, costs, and the overall effectiveness of aircraft operations that support their requirements.

d. The Assistant Administrator for External Relations is responsible for providing the interface between NASA and elements of the Department of Defense (DoD), providing policy guidance and coordination for NASA international activities, and requesting aircraft flight clearances from foreign governments through the Department of State.

e. The Director, AMD, is responsible for functional leadership, staff support to the Administrator, and central services as they relate to aircraft management and is the Agency's Senior Aviation Management Official (SAMO) as required by FMR 102-33.30. The Director, AMD, also is the Agency focal point for aviation operations, aircraft management issues, and implementation of aviation safety policy developed by the Office of Safety and Mission Assurance. On such matters, the AMD is the Agency's liaison to the FAA, the DoD, the GSA, the Interagency Committee for Aviation Policy, other Government agencies, and industry. The Director, AMD, is responsible for developing policies governing the management of NASA aircraft, including aircraft operations, aircraft maintenance, aviation training, airworthiness, flight readiness reviews, cost effectiveness, and implementation of Federal regulations and policies. The Director, AMD, shall coordinate the Headquarters review and evaluation of proposed acquisitions, classifications, assignments, and dispositions of NASA aircraft and shall recommend approval of proposed actions to the Assistant Administrator, OI. The Director, AMD, shall coordinate reviews of all NASA flight operations to ensure compliance with NASA aircraft management policies. All Headquarters-generated contracts or agreements that include aviation operations shall be reviewed and concurred on by the Assistant Administrator, OI, prior to contract award.

f. The NASA IAOP is responsible for providing assistance, counsel, and recommendations to the Assistant Administrator, OI, other NASA Senior Management Officials, and the AMD concerning Agency policies and any other matters related to NASA aircraft operations. The IAOP shall support IAOP reviews of Center aircraft operations.

g. Center Directors are responsible for ensuring the safe, efficient, and effective operation of all aircraft assigned to their Centers. Center Directors are responsible for implementing actions and instructions necessary to comply with NASA policy on aircraft management and aviation safety; for ensuring that flight objectives and flight resources meet program requirements; and for reporting aircraft costs and performance metrics in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget guidelines and NASA procedural requirements. For Centers that have flight operations, Center Directors shall establish a program-independent flight operations office that shall carry out the functions of a Chief of Flight Operations, an Aviation Safety Officer, a Chief of Maintenance, a Chief of Engineering (when aircraft modifications are routine), and a Chief of Quality Assurance. The functions of the Chief of Flight Operations and Aviation Safety Officer are inherently governmental and shall be performed by civil service personnel, but shall not be performed by the same individual as a dual role. Center Directors have the authority to approve aircraft charters or short-term (30-day) aircraft leases and to approve acquisition of aircraft to be used solely for spare parts, wind tunnel models, or as static displays. Such acquisitions shall be reported in advance to the AMD in writing. Center Directors shall provide support to the IAOP Aircraft Operations Review Program. Center Directors with responsibility over NASA airfields and helipads shall ensure that those

airfields are managed, maintained, and utilized in a safe, effective, and cost-efficient manner in accordance with NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management. If the Center has no flight operations office, support from another NASA flight operations office shall be coordinated by the AMD and the IAOP.

h. The Chief of Flight Operations of a program-independent flight office plans, organizes, directs, and controls the operations, maintenance, modification, safety, and support of all Center-assigned or -contracted aircraft. He or she shall be the senior line manager responsible for aviation activities at the Center and shall be assigned the resources and authority necessary to manage and conduct safe, effective, and efficient operations in accordance with NASA directives, guidance, and other applicable Federal regulations. Any Center contract or agreement, including Space Act Agreements, that includes aviation operations shall be reviewed and concurred with by the Chief of Flight Operations prior to contract award or execution of the agreement.

i. Managers at all levels are responsible for supporting the safe conduct of aircraft operations that involve their programs or personnel. Managers who write aviation contracts shall be responsible for coordinating those contracts with the Center's flight operations office to ensure compliance with the NASA aviation safety program and aircraft management policies.

j. The Center contracting office shall obtain concurrence from the Center flight operations office that the contemplated award complies with the NASA aviation safety program requirements, particularly as outlined in NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management. If the contract is expected to provide long-term, continuous support (greater than one year), the aviation program shall be subject to the IAOP review process in the same manner as NASA Centers.

k. The designated pilot-in-command is ultimately responsible for the conduct and safety of the flight and is the final authority concerning the safe operation of the aircraft and all safety aspects of the flight.

6. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

None.

7. MEASUREMENTS/VERIFICATION

a. The Director, AMD, shall provide an annual report to the Assistant Administrator, OI, which shall include an Agency-wide aircraft inventory, a summary on the utilization of each aircraft in relation to the programs it supports, a consolidated summary of the performance measurements used and provided by each Center, aviation safety statistics, and an analysis of future aircraft requirements.

b. The IAOP Operations Review Program shall be used to measure each Center's flight operations activities in accordance with NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management.

8. CANCELLATION

NPD 7900.4B, NASA Aircraft Operations Management, dated April 27, 2004.

/s/Chris J. Scolese
Acting Administrator

ATTACHMENT A: (TEXT)

None.

URL for Graphic)

None.

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