



ICAO

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INFORMATION PAPER

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**Eleventh North American, Central American and Caribbean Directors of Civil Aviation Meeting
(NACC/DCA/11)**

Varadero, Cuba, 28-30 June 2023

**Agenda Item 4: NAM/CAR Regional Safety/Air Navigation Implementation
4.2 Air Navigation Implementation Matters**

STRENGTHENING FOUNDATIONAL ASPECTS OF AERODROME PREPAREDNESS

(Presented by United States)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Weather-related disasters are predictable, yet unplanned events in the Caribbean and American Southeast. When a major emergency or natural disaster occurs, the civil aviation domain faces enormous pressure from domestic and international stakeholders to resume operations as swiftly as possible. It is particularly crucial for island communities, which may largely depend upon the resumption of air navigation services and airport infrastructure to enable all aspects of emergency response.

The United States believes that there is a growing need to establish a regional body dedicated to coordination amongst airport operators and emergency management/humanitarian assistance agencies during emergencies to focus efforts on sharing information, enhancing partnerships, and improving communication mechanisms. Further, the United States believes that there are foundational aspects of emergency response, such as exercising and training that could improve a States' ability to effectively recover from an emergency.

This paper highlights the current efforts of the Caribbean Aviation Resilience and Recovery Group (CARRG) is undertaking with the International Civil Aviation Organization North America, Central America, and the Caribbean Office (ICAO NACC) and Airports Council International-Latin America (ACI-LAC), to address foundational aspects that would enable airport operators to respond to an emergency. This paper also details plans for "Airport-to-Airport Hurricane Assistance Program" (AAHA) that airport operators can contact for assistance related to an emergency event.

Strategic Objectives:

- Strategic Objective 1 – Safety

References:

- ICAO Annex 14
- FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5200-31C Airport Emergency Plans

1. Background

- 1.1 The aviation system is a network; a disruption at a single airport can result in a cascade of negative impacts of a wide variety of stakeholders. Combined with the increasing frequency of emergency events in the Caribbean, predominantly tropical storms and hurricanes, there has been a growing need to establish a regional body dedicated to coordinating amongst airport operators and emergency management/humanitarian assistance agencies during emergencies to focus efforts on sharing information, enhancing partnerships, and improving communication mechanisms as it relates to civil aviation. These actions will help mitigate vulnerabilities and strengthen response and recovery efforts.
- 1.2 In 2019, the United States and 16 Caribbean states signed a Declaration of Intent (DOI) creating the Caribbean Aviation Resilience and Recovery Group (CARRG) seeking to strengthen coordination on aviation resilience and recovery from emergency events. From the United States, the Federal Aviation Administration’s Office of International Affairs (FAA) has served as the de facto coordinator of the CARRG. Since then, the International Civil Aviation Organization North America, Central America, and the Caribbean Office (ICAO NACC), and Airports Council International-Latin America (ACI-LAC) have begun coordinating how best to collaborate in the area of resiliency and disaster preparedness in the Caribbean.
- 1.3 During the 10th NACC Directors of Civil Aviation (DCA) meeting in Martinique, the FAA CARRG team briefed on the concept of airport-to-airport mutual assistance. At that time, the FAA CARRG team sought support from ICAO Member States to form a Task Force (TF) to develop a proposed framework for airport-to-airport mutual assistance in the Caribbean. Representatives from ICAO, ACI-LAC, and the FAA started meeting in early 2023 to determine the feasibility and next steps for supporting Caribbean airports during the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season (further details below).

2 What is Airport-to-Airport Mutual Assistance?

- 2.1 Airport-to-airport mutual assistance is a voluntary assistance program where an airport(s) outside an area impacted by a disaster voluntarily sends aid to an airport(s) impacted by a disaster. It pulls on the expertise of other skilled airports in the State and/or region to provide services such as conducting airfield inspections, assisting in facility restoration, providing emergency support services, and other activities as the situation warrants. A mutual assistance program can be as simple as a group of experts being “on call” during an emergency to provide support and advice to an affected airport. Conversely, mutual assistance can be as complex as sending a team to an impacted airport with supplies to provide on-the-ground assistance. It also allows for potentially impacted airport staff to be supplemented by outside experts in the event they need to care for their affected home and/or family. The fundamental premise is that no one knows how to help an airport better than someone from another airport.

3 CARRG Action Plan for 2023

- 3.1 In February 2023, the TF began meeting to determine the feasibility and next steps for supporting Caribbean airports ahead of the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season. The group agreed to pursue two concurrent work streams to support resiliency efforts specific to the needs of aerodromes:
- **Phase 1 Foundational Effort:** The goal of Phase 1 is to identify what guidance and training is needed to allow airport operators to respond to an emergency. Additionally, this effort can identify where CAAs might need to increase guidance and/or oversight to their aerodromes.
 - **Phase 2 Operational Effort:** The goal of Phase 2 is to launch a “Mutual Assistance Subject Matter Expert Pilot Program” that airport operators can virtually contact for assistance/advice related to an emergency event.

4 Phase 1: Strengthen Foundational Aspects of Aerodrome Preparedness

- 4.1 The goal of Phase 1 is to identify what guidance and training is needed to allow airport operators to respond effectively to large-scale emergency events such as a hurricane. To this end, the TF plans to send an “Aerodrome Preparedness Questionnaire” to airports and civil aviation authorities (CAAs) in the Caribbean region to establish a baseline for preparedness and adherence to ICAO Annex 14.
- 4.2 ICAO Annex 14 9.1.1 requires all aerodromes to draft an Aerodrome Emergency Plan (AEP). Furthermore, Annex 14 9.3.3 details the requirements for conducting emergency exercises. At a minimum, all Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) should ensure their aerodromes are adhering to this ICAO standard.
- 4.3 Further in the United States, *FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5200-31C Airport Emergency Plans* provides guidance to U.S. airports in meeting the requirements outlined in Part 139, the U.S. code regulating the certification of airports. AC150/5200-31C Chapter 7, Part 4 provides additional guidance specific to various natural disasters. Airports can choose to add an addendum to their AEP, which goes into further detail on planning, assignment of responsibilities, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and checklists, and response activities in each phase of a disaster. If not already included, States in the Caribbean should consider adding supplemental documentation specific to actions related to responding to a hurricane (guidance related to earthquakes or volcanic eruptions are also advisable for States that experience those disasters).
- 4.4 The goal of the questionnaire is to determine if there are areas where aerodromes might need additional support (such as help in exercising hurricane scenarios or regularly updating AEPs). The questionnaire is not intended to be punitive in nature. Sample questions include:
- Do you have an AEP? If so, how often is it updated?
 - Does your AEP include additional guidance specific to hurricanes.
 - How often does your airport conduct an emergency exercise? Does the exercise include a scenario such as hurricane-force winds or flooding?
 - Does your plan include national or regional-level emergency management agencies? If so, are those points of contact current?

5 Establish a Mutual Assistance Subject Matter Expert Pilot

5.1 Currently, there are no existing organizations where an airport can call to request advice leading up to or in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. Through the development and execution of the Airports Excellence Program (APEX), ACI-LAC already has amassed a list of aerodrome experts from the region with expertise based on different types of events (hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, etc.). ACI-LAC plans to pilot a virtual assistance group where airport operators can call with questions and be paired with an expert to provide assistance. In the Pilot Phase, the Mutual Assistance Peer Group intends to operate virtually. The United States intends to support this group by providing experts with hurricane response.

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