PATROL OPERATIONS

FLIGHT FOLLOWING-MANUAL

1. INTRODUCTION

A.   Purpose

This section provides a guideline for a manual flight following system to augment a real-time satellite tracking system or to provide sufficient flight following capability in the event an operator does not utilize satellite tracking.

The purpose of a flight following system is to keep the operator aware of the position and status of each aircraft and its crew as well as to provide an overdue aircraft alert and trigger the Emergency Response Plan should an aircraft become overdue. In addition, last known position, fuel status, persons on-board and projected flight path information can be provided to search and rescue authorities should their services be required.

While it is preferred that each patrol operator employ a monitored real-time satellite tracking system on each aircraft deployed for aerial patrol, there maybe several reasons for utilizing this manual system such as the satellite system being inoperative or removed for service. Operators who are on short-term (less than 12 months) should utilize a positive flight following system, which would include a manual system to provide operational capability.

The positive flight following system should be included in each operators operation manual. Each operator for each flight will determine the length of time between air to ground communications and the subsequent actions should an aircraft become overdue. (Recommendation: every 30 minutes unless in contact with ATC)

1.1   RESPONSIBILITIES

A.   Operator

The Operator is responsible for maintaining an accurate and timely awareness of the location and status of each aircraft and crew. This status must be maintained by a person or facility not engaged in flight activities and will usually be a ground based dispatcher or flight following administrator (FFA). The status of each flight shall be maintained on a written or computerized Daily Flight Following Log which will be updated in real-time as new information is received.

B.   Pilot

The pilot is responsible for reporting all required information to the Operator/FFA in a timely manner. This will usually be accomplished by way of cell phone or two-way pager. These reports will generally be made prior to each take-off, upon each landing or should an event necessitate a change to the flight path, destination, estimated time of arrival (ETA) or aircraft status.

. Recommended Procedures for Pilot/Observer:

• Contact FFA with request to utilize Automated Flight Following (AFF) via satellite or Positive / Manual Flight Following (preferably via phone or email prior to flight).

• Provide FFA with appropriate flight information (see 1.2 below)

• If AFF satellite availability is lost at the FFA office, or the signal is lost during

the flight, flight following will revert to 30(?) minute radio check-in procedures.

C.   Flight Following Administrator (FFA)

The FFA will log all calls from the pilots as they are received and maintain the log in a timely and accurate way such that the location and status of each flight is available to the operator. The FFA will also have a method of alerting them if an ETA is exceeded should they become distracted by other duties.

The FFA is also responsible for alerting the appropriate operator personnel when an aircraft exceeds its ETA and is considered "overdue."   The FFA may also initiate the "overdue aircraft" procedure from the Emergency Response Plan.

If the FFA must leave their duty station (end of shift/lunch) they are responsible to insure that their duties are transferred to another trained FFA and that there are no gaps in the flight following coverage.

Recommended Procedures for FFA:

• When AFF is requested, ensure AFF program access is available and request standard flight information from the pilot/Chief of Party (COP). Document using existing FFA forms and logs.

• Provide pilot/observer with appropriate frequencies to monitor during the flight (FFA frequency, National flight following, etc.). Ensure these frequencies are monitored during duration of flight.

• Originating FFA center will communicate with destination FFA center as to who will track on AFF.

• If flight following will be handed off to another FFA office during the flight, brief this with the pilot/COP, providing frequency change, call sign, and other appropriate information.

• Brief with pilot/observer on radio calls expected and responses you will provide.
• Check AFF system to ensure icon for the aircraft is shown.

• Shortly after take off, pilot/COP will call via radio stating "Nxxxx off (airport   name) AFF". Check aircraft Icon color and verify time and date. Respond to the radio call, stating "Nxxxx, (FFA call sign) AFF".

• Keep the AFF system running on a computer during the entire flight.

• Set 30(?) minute timer, and check flight progress as appropriate during the flight. Document using existing forms and logs.

• If the signal has been lost (for example - the aircraft icon turns RED). Immediately attempt contact with the aircraft via radio and follow normal lost communication, procedures as appropriate (to be defined).

• If radio contact is made after a lost signal, flight may continue utilizing 30(?) minute radio checkins for flight following.

• In the event that the FFA tracking an aircraft on AFF loses Internet connection (on the ground), Immediately attempt contact with the aircraft via radio. If unable to rely on 30(?) minute radio checkins then flight following will fall back on FAA flight plan.

• Flight following hand offs must be coordinated when using AFF and Manual / Positive Flight Following: Coordinate with affected FFA staff and agree on who will be responsible for flight following, how it will be accomplished (AFF and/or radio check-ins), frequencies aircraft should monitor, and if frequency changes are required, when and where they should be made.

• Ensure pilots/observers are briefed on any hand offs anticipated (call signs, frequencies and when to switch) and if a combination of satellite AFF and radio check-ins will be required (when and where).

1.2 FLIGHT FOLLOWING CALLS

A   Take-Off

As a minimum the pilot will report to the FFA the following information prior to each take-off:

> Aircraft Identification (N-Number)
> Point of Departure
> Departure Time
> Hours of Fuel on Board
> Route of Flight (Patrol Route)
> Intended Destination
> Estimated Time of Arrival/Time in Route
> Proposed Alternate in Marginal Weather
> Name(s) of any passengers (non-crew)
> Emergency Contact Number for each Passenger

B.   Landing

Immediately upon landing the pilot will report the following information to the FFA:

> Point of Landing
> Time of Landing
> Purpose of Landing (Fuel/End of Day/Meal) (Optional)
> Estimated Ground Time (Optional)
> Fuel Remaining (Optional)

C.   Exceptional Reports

In addition to the above routine reports, the pilot will report any of the following to the FFA in a timely manner:

> Change in ETA by more than 30 minutes
> Change in Route of Flight
> Significant Change in Aircraft Status
> Picking Up or Dropping off Passengers
> Change in Crew or Crew Assignments
> Exceptional Ground Delays

1.2   OVERDUE AIRCRAFT

An aircraft will be considered overdue if the pilot has not reported landing within 30 minutes of the ETA. If an aircraft is overdue the FFA will report this to the appropriate Operator personnel and or take the following actions:

A.   Call the crew Cell Phones. Most overdue aircraft are the result of pilots failing to report immediately upon landing so a phone call will eliminate this possibility.
B.   Call the ATC tower at the destination and alternate airports to see if they have had contact with the aircraft.
C.   Call the FBO at the destination to see if they have refueled or had contact with the aircraft/crew.

If none of the above yield information about the aircraft then it should be assumed that the aircraft is missing and the Operator should implement their Emergency Response Plan.

1.3   SECURING FLIGHT OPERATIONS

An FFA must remain on duty and will maintain contact with the crews until all have landed and reported that they are complete for the day. At that time, the FFA will declare Flight Operations Secure and so inform the Operator and note the time in the Flight Following Log.

1.4   RETENTION OF FLIGHT FOLLOWING LOGS

Completed daily flight following logs will be retained by the Operator for a period of at least 6 months

Minimum recommended equipment or services
Satellite tracking
FM radio
Satellite telephones
Flight time limits
Fuel endurance
Reporting frequency
Cell phones
Flight plans
Available FFA
Active tracking
FSS/FAA flight plans
Risk assessment per individual leg, route, terrain, region, time of year