

07SAB08

19 September 2006

ALPA International have issued the following safety alert concerning operations outside of class B airspace

ALPA-International continues to receive pilot reports stating that, at a number of high-density U.S. airports, air traffic controllers have issued clearances to pilots of arriving aircraft that have caused these flights to:

- (1) exit the side of the top tier of the Class B airspace, or
- (2) descend below the floor of the Class B airspace.

Additionally, controllers rarely issue the required advisories that inform pilots when they are leaving or reentering Class B airspace. FAA Order 7400.2, Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters, states, *"The primary purpose of a Class B airspace area is to reduce the potential for midair collisions in the airspace surrounding airports with high-density air traffic operations"*.

Supporting this document are items in FAR Part 91 and the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM):

- FAR 91.131 requires pilots of large turbine-powered aircraft to remain at or above the floor of Class B airspace *unless advised otherwise by ATC*.

NOTE: The FAA air traffic controllers' handbook, FAA Order 7110.65R, says that, when controllers direct pilots out of Class B airspace for separation purposes, *such events should be the exception rather than the rule* and requires them to advise pilots when they exit or reenter Class B airspace.

- The AIM states that *clearance for a visual approach is not authorization for pilots of turbine-powered airplanes to operate below the designated floor of Class B airspace*.

ALPA has found several inconsistencies in the documents relating to ATC procedures and Class B airspace. The Association has brought them to the attention of the FAA and the rest of the aviation community.

Recommendations:

Until the FAA permanently resolves this problem, ALPA-I recommends:

- Whenever possible, have a chart depicting the Class B airspace in which you will operate available for reference.
- If it appears you may exit the Class B airspace, advise the controller that you want to remain within it.
- If you find yourself operating below a Class B upper shelf, **DO NOT EXCEED the FAR 91.117 SPEED LIMIT OF 200 kts IAS**. Controllers do not have the authority to issue a clearance to fly faster than this limit.

IFALPA provides this data for information only, In all cases pilots should follow their company's guidance and procedures.

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