

Changes to UK Air Traffic Services outside controlled airspace

For many years it has been IFALPA's policy that air transport operations should only be carried out within controlled airspace. Nevertheless a number of commercial operations are carried out in areas which are outside of controlled airspace, notably helicopters engaged in oil industry support and other types of aerial work. Therefore, it will be of interest to crews to learn that on 12 March 2009 the UK's Air Traffic Services Outside Controlled Airspace (ATSOCAS) will change. These services are provided by a variety of air traffic units and used by a wide variety of users – from general aviation to commercial flights and military aircraft.

The new services will offer four levels of information:

A Basic Service: is intended to offer the pilot maximum autonomy and the avoidance of other traffic is solely the pilot's responsibility. The controller/FISO will pass information pertinent to the safe and efficient conduct of flight. This can include weather, changes of serviceability of facilities, conditions at aerodromes and general activity information within a unit's area of responsibility.

A Traffic Service: provides the pilot with surveillance derived traffic information on conflicting aircraft. No deconfliction advice is passed and the pilot is responsible for collision avoidance. A Traffic Service contains the information available in a Basic Service. In addition, controllers provide surveillance derived traffic information on relevant conflicting traffic. Headings and/or levels may also be issued for positioning and/or sequencing.

A Deconfliction Service: provides the pilot with traffic information and deconfliction advice on conflicting aircraft. However, the avoidance of other aircraft is ultimately the pilot's responsibility. A Deconfliction Service contains the information available in a Basic Service. In addition, controllers shall aim to assist the pilot with his responsibility for the safety of the aircraft by passing traffic information and deconfliction advice. Headings and/or levels will also be issued for positioning, sequencing and/or deconfliction advice.

A Procedural Service: is a non surveillance service in which deconfliction advice is provided against other aircraft in receipt of a Procedural Service from the same controller. The avoidance of other aircraft is the pilot's responsibility.

The CAA publication detailing the new services and how they should be applied (CAP774) is available to download from the CAA website at www.caa.co.uk and a separate interactive guide is available at www.airspacesafety.com