

New Airspace Regs May Benefit Laserists

ILDA Argues on Behalf of Laser Firms at US Meeting

By Patrick Murphy,
ILDA Airspace Issues Coordinator

The December SAE G-10T meeting in Orlando, Florida focused on new regulations the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration plans to issue in mid-1999. The regulations will determine how the FAA will process applications by laser companies that want to perform outdoor shows.

This was one of the most productive meetings ever by the G-10T committee, a volunteer panel that advises the FAA on how to prevent entertainment and other lasers from posing a hazard to aircraft. The light show industry was able to make a number of points that would enhance both aircraft safety and our ability to do timely shows.

ILDA members present at the meeting included: Tony Zmorenski, ILDA Board Member and Walt Disney World safety officer; Greg Makhov, ILDA Safety Committee Chair; Patrick Murphy, ILDA Airspace Issues Coordinator; Drew Foster, AVI Imaging With Lasers; Jay Parkinson, Greg Rockwell and Jim Ponce, all of Rockwell Laser Industries.

New FAA Attitude

The FAA has a new attitude of urgency towards the laser issue. They finally want to fund the Oklahoma City simulator testing (to gauge the effects of laser light on pilot performance). They also want G-10T to develop an "Advisory Circular" with information for pilots and a document that summarizes all available information relating to laser/aircraft hazards.

The current regulations governing lasers in airspace, known as "7400.2D,"

will be greatly stripped down when they are reissued later this year. The new regulations, 7400.2E, will focus only on what the FAA airspace procedures specialists will need to know to process laser applications. The new document will not have information useful to applicants (i.e., laser show companies); instead, this information is expected to be included in a separate document. It was felt this will separate the FAA's regulatory responsibility from its advice to applicants.

One of the documents worked on was proposed by Rockwell Laser Industries. It is a reporting form that includes all the details FAA will need to evaluate a laser installation. The draft "FAA Laser Light Show Report" form is available as a Microsoft Word document at Rockwell's Web site (www.rli.com).

GPS Requirement?

One thing which the FAA made clear is that it wants laser companies to use compasses, inclinometers and (if appropriate) GPS devices to verify any beam pointing restrictions. Rockwell officials discussed plans for their software program, Skyzan, that may help meet future FAA requirements. The upcoming version of the program will feature integrated reporting, allowing users to perform calculations and generate FAA reports at the same time. The resulting "Laser Light Show Report" form will be the same one used by the FAA. The updated program is expected to be released in mid-1999.

ILDA will continue to work closely with the FAA and SAE G-10T on this draft. More information is posted about the FAA rules on the ILDA Web site (under Safety Committee). If you have comments, please send them directly to me: Patrick Murphy, Airspace Issues Coordinator, pm@pangolin.com.

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