



Air Traffic Services Contingency Guidance

01 August, 2024
Issue 1.00



AIR
SAFETY
SUPPORT
INTERNATIONAL

Air Traffic Services Contingency Guidance

Problems come in many forms and to help deal with those eventualities Air Traffic Service Units (ATSU) have prepared contingency plans which should be exercised on a regular basis.

The intention of this leaflet is to act as a high-level checklist and offer advice on the options available. We will consider three (3) scenarios; natural disasters, technical issues and other events. This list is not exhaustive but it should at least, provide a prompt for those areas to consider and help you prepare your contingency plans in advance.

Natural Disasters

In the UK Overseas Territories (OT) the majority of cases will involve weather of some sort – usually hurricanes and/or storm surges and floods. Assuming that normal precautions have been taken in advance, here are some other items to consider.

Health and Safety:

- Is it safe for the ATC staff to operate?
 - ✧ Consider damaged electrical cables, gas and water leaks, electrical and lighting failures or interruptions to power.

Primary considerations:

- Are all the Tower, aerodrome systems and resources operating satisfactorily?

Security

- Is the Tower secure against unauthorised entry?
 - ✧ If not, consider implementing temporary control of entry/ positive recognition procedures. This might be something like a local webcam or a security officer at the base of the Tower to check IDs.

People

- Do you have enough qualified ATCOs to cover the watch periods?
 - ✧ If not, consider a strict PPR scheme to minimise traffic, identify the peak traffic periods, NOTAM a reduction in aerodrome hours and seek a FRMS modification from your regulator.

What are you being asked to do?

- If humanitarian aid flights need access to the airport, consider when these will arrive and plan rosters accordingly.
- Don't waste valuable resource by trying to remain open for too long or when no ATS is needed.

External airport facilities

- Does the Aerodrome lighting work, does at least some of it work?
- Can you operate safely by issuing a NOTAM to advise of any deficiencies?
- Is the runway clear of FOD and debris?
- Do you have enough ramp space for large cargo aircraft and helicopters?
- Is there fuel available, can it be dispensed?

External agencies

- Is the En-Route Centre still operating?
- Are your adjacent ATSUs still operating?
- ✈ Consider - revised, temporary co-ordination arrangements.

RFFS cover

- Is it available and at what Category?
- Can aircraft operators cope with a reduction in Category?



Technical Issues

- Radios – range and clarity. Are you able to receive and transmit? If not, is another frequency available which is working?
- Recorders and landlines – are they still operating, do you have single or dual channel recording?
 - ✧ Is the ambient recording working?
 - ✧ If not, consider mitigations such as manual transcription. Do mobile phones and the internet still work – consider using as a back-up for communications and MET data/warnings.
- Navigation aids – are they still functioning correctly?
 - ✧ Has there been any impact on the GPS signal?
 - ✧ How do you know?
- Can you send and receive Flight Plans and other ATS data such as NOTAMs?
- Is the standby generator and/or UPS working?
 - ✧ How long will these work for?
 - ✧ Is fuel available?
- Lighting - does the Aerodrome lighting work, does at least some of it work?
 - ✧ Are the CCRs still serviceable?
 - ✧ Is there sufficient ramp lighting for aircraft handling to take place safely?



Other events - ATS Provision and Aerodrome

- Are you able to provide the same level of ATS as you would normally?
 - ✧ If not, consider what the changes might look like.
 - ✧ Are you able to provide both Aerodrome and Approach, will it just reduce to Aerodrome only or nothing at all?
- Are any of your team, licensed to provide an Aeronautical Radio service to cover essential movements?
 - ✧ Is a temporary facility available now for them to work from?
 - ✧ Have you practiced using it as part of your contingency planning?
- Consider whether it is safer to shut down the service and/or make it available for a limited period only when you can be certain that resources (human and technical) will be available.

- It is often difficult to find sufficient parking space for aircraft – is enough parking still available?
 - ✧ Depending on the seriousness of the event, will you need to prioritise some flights over others?
- Is ground handling, loading, fuel etc available?
 - ✧ Do you require additional security, Immigration or Public Health support?
 - ✧ If support is being provided by the military, consider handling different types of large aircraft, large helicopters, underslung loads, weapons and ammunition handling and storage.



Other events – Industrial Action

- Industrial action is not as uncommon as you might think. Seek advice and get support from your HR and higher authority at an early stage – this is probably not something you can sort out yourself.
- Are members of your ATC team taking industrial action – if so, how many?
 - ✧ Consider whether you have any part-time resource who may be willing to increase their working hours on a temporary basis.
- Consider how long it might last and what (if any) service you may be able to provide.
- Once you have the facts – tell your Regulator as soon as possible. They may be able to help and/or issue dispensations or modifications to regulations.
- Try to avoid becoming embroiled in negotiations about pay and conditions. This is a matter for HR management and will detract from your primary focus.



Other events -

Shortage of Qualified Resource

It can be very difficult if a unit experiences an unexpected reduction in licensed ATCOs. This is often exacerbated by the length of time it takes to train a replacement controller to achieve validation standard even if they have had previous experience. However, there are things you can do to mitigate the impact on airport operations:

1. Agree a reduction in Airport Opening Hours with your Airport Manager so that the airport closes earlier or opens later each day.
2. If possible, avoid making a commitment to provide an on-call service, except for genuine safety of life flights.
3. A recommendation is that the airport should close at midnight (at the latest) to ensure compliance with the FRMS requirements and provide some flexibility in shift patterns.
4. Watch out for night duties as they have severe rest period requirements.
5. Apply strict PPR at all times.
6. Restrict aircraft movements (per hour) to a maximum level that a single ATCO can handle for 4 hours without a break.
7. Consider longer shift periods. This is unlikely to be popular but increased shifts can still fit within the FRMS requirements and some flexibility from your colleagues may be essential.
8. Discuss a modification to the FRMS with your regulator. This will also require a Risk Assessment.
9. If you don't already have it, determine and publish reduced OJT hours for experienced ATCOs in your MATS/UTP.
10. Decide how long the changes/modifications might be needed for – it is likely to be for several months.
11. Decide how you will monitor the effectiveness of the changes as part of your Change Management process. How will you know if ATCOs are becoming fatigued? Some pre-printed forms that the ATCOs complete at the end of each shift to say how they felt is a good method but active supervision by management or senior ATCOs is always required.
12. Publish any changes by NOTAM if required.



Other events – Tower Evacuations

- Evaluate the reasons behind the evacuation – minor or major event? Is anybody injured?
- Follow the guidance in your Emergency Plan/MATS for the various scenarios including fire, bomb threat etc.
- Establish how long the Tower will be unavailable for – short term or longer?
 - ✧ Do you have a temporary facility?
 - ✧ Can you see the Movement Area from there?
 - ✧ If not, is anywhere else available where you can set up temporarily? – consider Aeronautical Radio.
- Think about radio availability, ranges and reliability – send NOTAM if power and/or DOC will be reduced.

—“

Failure to prepare
is to prepare to fail

”—

Preparation is key – remember the old adage ‘failure to prepare is to prepare to fail’ and make sure your contingency plans are up to date and that you have exercised them on a regular basis.

Nobody can anticipate every eventuality but hopefully, this booklet will give you something to pick up and refer to in the event that you need it.

For more information on other ASSI Safety Promotional Material please go to www.airsafety.aero/safety_promotion or scan the QR code below.



AIR
SAFETY
SUPPORT
INTERNATIONAL

www.airsafety.aero/safety_promotion

