



# PROTOCOL (OPS.138) Aerial work operations

December 2024



### Acknowledgement of Country

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Artwork: James Baban.

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# 1. Purpose

This protocol is for the assessment of an Aerial Work Certificate (AWC) application under Part 138—Aerial work operations of the *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998* (CASR). This protocol is for the assessment of an initial AWC application and a variation to an existing AWC – which is a significant change under regulation 138.012. The protocol has been designed to work in conjunction with other protocols for specific approvals. This protocol enables standardisation of the assessment process.

## 2. Concept and philosophy

In this protocol an AWC is a permission granted by CASA under Part 138 for an aircraft flying in Australian territory conducting one or more of the following activities:

- an external load operation
- a dispensing operation
- a task specialist operation.

Aerial work operations may involve aircraft that range from a small R22 rotorcraft up to a large air transport type aeroplane such as a B747. For this reason, the assessment of an aerial work operator will involve a range of variables – from the simple one-person aerial mustering operation to a complex firebombing operation involving multi-crew operations.

All AWCs are issued for a specified period. To continue operating, an AWC holder must apply for and be issued with a new AWC, prior to the expiry of the existing AWC.

The elements required to be assessed for an AWC application will depend on the size, nature and complexity of operations and involve verification of the applicant's claims through a range of activities, including:

- desktop assessments of the documentation provided
- site inspection of facilities
- assessment of key personnel
- proving flights (where required).

An initial application for an AWC will involve several inspectors from different disciplines forming a project team, whereas a significant change to an existing AWC may consist of only one inspector depending on the application.

Before the issue of an AWC or the variation to an existing AWC can be recommended, the project team will verify the application meets the requirements for the proposed operation.

Where the application is for a significant change (variation) that is not covered by a separate approval protocol, the inspector should complete the sections of the (OPS.138) worksheet appropriate to the application. The inspector must detail the scope of the assessment on the worksheet.

## 3. Process

All administration tasks should follow standard regulatory service administration procedures (as applicable), in addition to the following:

- a. If required, CASA will facilitate a pre-application meeting (see section 3.2 of this protocol).
- b. For an initial issue AWC, operators will submit the Aerial Work Operations form (CASA-04-5505) to CASA for an approval under regulation 138.035.
- c. For a significant change to an AWC, operators will submit Aerial Work Operations form (CASA-04-5505) to CASA for an approval under regulation 138.062.
- d. Regservices will create a case in EAP to be assigned to a CASA inspector as either the project manager or the assessor, depending on the application.

- e. Regservices and the inspector should confirm that an EAP stop alert is not active
- f. If required, the project manager will review the application and form a project team to conduct the assessment.
- g. All associated CASA staff must be knowledgeable of, and competent with, (OPS.138) Principle which provides details for the assessment of an initial issue AWC or significant change to an existing AWC.
- h. The relevant sections (determined by scope) of Worksheet (OPS.138) must be completed by the CASA inspector and saved as a PDF document in RMS, including:
  - i. the assessment summary
  - ii. the approval data sheet.
- i. If the application is a significant change, the inspector must complete the relevant section on the approval data sheet and provide the revision details for the operations manual.
- j. The inspector must complete EAP in accordance with the EAP OAS Case Management - Regulatory Oversight Division (ROD) handbook (CASA-03-550).

The assessment must be endorsed by an independent person, see section 3.1 of this Protocol.

## 3.1 Recommendation endorsement

All recommendations must be endorsed by a separate person, normally a Manager Regulatory Services, prior to the delegate issuing the authorisation.

The Manager Regulatory Services may assign the endorsement to another inspector.

The role of the endorser is to:

- ensure all sections of the worksheets been completed
- the assessment summary page has been completed
- the approval data sheet has been completed
- all worksheets and relevant documents have been filed in RMS
- the "Assessment" section of EAP has been fulfilled
- the "Create recommendation" section of EAP has been fulfilled

If satisfied the endorser will complete the "Endorse recommendation" section of EAP and forward the task to the delegate.

If the assessing inspector holds the delegation for the authorisation, they can issue the authorisation.

## 3.2 Pre-application meeting

A pre-application meeting is conducted by CASA to help the applicant understand the certification process and the requirements to obtain an AWC.

The applicant may also request a pre-application meeting with CASA through regservices.

A pre-application meeting is recommended for the initial issue of any AWC and for the addition of complex operations. Regservices will consult with the national manager to determine if the operation is deemed complex.

It is recommended that the pre-application meeting, chaired by the CASA project manager, be attended by all project team members and the applicant or their representatives.

The conduct of the meeting must give due consideration to the applicant's capabilities and expertise.

The following items must be included in the agenda for discussion at the pre-application meeting:

- a. The proposed operations.
- b. The proposed management structure and the qualifications and experience of the personnel proposed to conduct the operations.
- c. The proposed location and facilities. The facilities need to be in a ready state for on-site inspection and testing, if required.
- d. The certification process, and the roles and responsibilities of CASA and the applicant during the certification process. The applicant should be advised of situations that may cause delays and the suspension of the assessment process (e.g. incomplete or unsatisfactory documents, unsatisfactory inspections and tests and/or payment delays). The applicant must clearly understand that the documentation must be submitted in sufficient time to allow CASA to complete the assessment process and to issue the AWC before the intended commencement date of the applicant's operations. Delay by the applicant in responding to CASA will adversely impact on the time taken to complete the assessment phase and may result in suspension or cancellation of the application.
- e. Regulatory service fees. The applicant must clearly understand the distinction between the provision of advice at the pre-application meeting—which does not attract a regulatory service fee, however, the provision of assessments, checks, inspections and consultancy advice after the pre-application meeting—which attracts a regulatory service fee.

Note: Minutes should be taken during the pre-application meeting and distributed to all participants.

## 4. List of supplements

Only the following supplements may be used in support of this protocol. The most recently approved versions will be found on the CASA intranet website. Approved forms are located on CASA's external website.

- [Principle \(OPS.138\) Aerial work operations](#)
- [Worksheet \(OPS.138\) Aerial work operations](#)
- [Aerial Work Operations form](#).

## 5. Scope

This protocol is for the assessment of an initial issue AWC application under Part 138. This protocol may also be used for certain significant change variations to an existing AWC, such as:

- the training and checking system
- adding a new aircraft
- adding a new aerial work activity
- adding consignment and carriage of dangerous goods cargo
- any other matter requiring assessment under this worksheet.

## 6. Competency requirements

To conduct the assessment, inspectors must have successfully completed the foundation training and advanced regulatory assessment training programs. Flight operations inspectors (FOIs), airworthiness inspectors and dangerous goods inspectors must hold the appropriate qualifications for the assessment of their specific areas.

Note: FOIs who have completed dangerous goods training in the previous 2 years can assess dangerous goods compliance where the operator does not intend to consign and carry dangerous goods.

Inspectors must also complete additional training in any other protocols related to the assessment.

## 7. Associated legislation

**Table 1. Legislation associated with this protocol**

Document	Title
Part 11 of CASR	Regulatory administrative procedures
Part 61 of CASR	Flight crew licensing
Part 91 of CASR	General operating and flight rules
Part 92 of CASR	Consignment and carriage of dangerous goods by air
Part 138 of CASR	Aerial work operations
Part 91 MOS	Part 91 (General operating and flight rules) Manual of Standards 2020
Part 138 MOS	Part 138 (Aerial work operations) Manual of Standards 2020
CAO 48.1	Civil Aviation Order 48.1 instrument - Fatigue management
CASA EX161/21	Miscellaneous Flight Operations Exemptions and Approvals (Transitional)
CASA 31/23	Flight Training and Flight Tests for Grant of Sling Operations, Winch and Rappelling Operations and Firefighting Endorsements
CASA EX67/24	Part 91 of CASR – Supplementary Exemptions and Directions Instrument 2024
CASA EX72/24	Part 138 and Part 91 of CASR – Supplementary Exemptions and Directions Instrument 2024
CASA EX73/24	Flight Operations Regulations – SMS, HF&NTS and T&C Systems - Supplementary Exemptions and Directions Instrument 2024

## 8. Guidance references

**Table 2. Guidance material relevant to this protocol**

Document	Title
AC 1-01	Understanding the legislative framework
AC 1-02	Guide to the development of expositions and operations manuals
AC11-04	Approvals under CASR Parts 91,103,119,121,129,131,132,133,135,138 and149 (including MOS)

Document	Title
AC 138-01	Part 138 core concepts
AC 138-05	Aerial work risk management
Multi-part AC 91-19, AC 121-04, AC 133-10, AC 135-12 and AC 138-10	Passenger safety information
Multi-part AC 91-13, AC 133-09, and AC 138-06	Night vision imaging - helicopters
AC 91-02	Guidelines for aeroplanes with MTOW not exceeding 5700 kg - suitable places to take off and land.
AC 91-10	Operations in the vicinity of non-controlled aerodromes
AC 91-22	Aircraft checklists
AC 91-25	Fuel and oil safety
AC 91-28	Crew safety during turbulence
AC 91-29	Guidelines for helicopters - suitable places to take off and land
AC 92-01(1)	Dangerous goods training for employees
AC 92-2(0)	Dangerous goods manuals
AC 92-03(0)	Dangerous goods training courses and instructors
AC 92-04(0)	Applications for permission to carry or consign dangerous goods under section 23 of the Civil Aviation Act 1988
AC 92-05	Use of Compressed Oxygen: Carriage and Consignment of Live Aquatic Animals for Transport by Air
Multi-part AC 119-11 and AC 138-02	Training and checking systems
CAAP 48-01	Fatigue management for flight crew members
Part 91 AMC/GM	Acceptable means of compliance and guidance material – General operating and flight rules
AC 138-01	Part 138 core concepts
AC 138-05	Aerial work risk management
Part 138 AMC/GM	Aerial work operations
CASA-03-0010	CAO 48.1 Instrument 2019 Appendix 1 to 6 Technical assessor handbook

# 9. ICAO references

Table 3. ICAO references applicable to this protocol

Document	Title
Doc 9284	Technical instructions for the safe transport of dangerous goods by air
Annex 2	Rules of the Air
Annex 18	Carriage of dangerous goods

# 10. Revision history

Amendments/revisions of this protocol are recorded below in order of most recent first.

Table 4. Revision history table

Version No.	Date	Parts/Sections	Details
1.3	December 2024	3	New section 3.1 added updated exemption list
1.2	November 2023	All	New format, inclusion of dangerous goods.
1.1	July 2023	Various	Section 3 - New EAP stop alert function and process amendments Additional legislation and dangerous goods references added.
1.0	August 2022	All	First Issue