



PROTOCOL

(OPS.131) Balloon transport operations

May 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices are located and their continuing connection to land, water and community, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Inside front cover artwork: James Baban.

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1. Purpose

This protocol is for the assessment of an Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) application under Part 131—Balloons and hot air airships of the *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998* (CASR). This protocol is for the assessment of an initial AOC application and a variation to an existing AOC – which is a significant change under regulation 131.030 of CASR. The protocol has been designed to work in conjunction with other protocols for specific approvals, such as (OPS.10) *Key personnel assessment*. This protocol enables standardisation of the assessment process.

2. Concept and philosophy

In this protocol, an AOC is a permission granted by CASA under section 27 of the *Civil Aviation Act 1988* to conduct prescribed Part 131 balloon transport operations within Australia.

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

The elements required to be assessed for an AOC 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 AOC may involve several inspectors from different disciplines forming a project team, whereas a significant change to an existing AOC may consist of only one inspector depending on the application.

Before the issue of an AOC or the variation to an existing AOC 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 that is not covered by a separate approval protocol, the inspector should complete the sections of the (OPS.131) 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 3.1 of this protocol).
- b. For an initial issue AOC, operators will submit the Air Operator's Certificate (balloon operations) application form (CASA-04-5664) to CASA for an approval under regulation 131.075 of CASR.
- c. For a significant change to an AOC, operators will submit Air Operator's Certificate (balloon operations) application form (CASA-04-5664) to CASA for an approval under regulation 131.100 of CASR.
- d. Regservices will create a case in EAP to be assigned to a CASA inspector as either the project team leader or the assessor, depending on the application.
- e. Regservices and the inspector should confirm that the 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, Principle (OPS.131) which provides details for the assessment of an initial issue AOC or a significant change to an existing AOC.

- h. The relevant sections (determined by scope) of Worksheet (OPS.131) 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 for a significant change, the inspector must complete the relevant section on the approval data sheet and provide revision details for the exposition.
- j. The inspector must complete EAP in accordance with the EAP OAS Case Management - Regulatory Oversight Division (ROD) handbook (CASA-03-550).

3.1 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 AOC.

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 AOC 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 AOC 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, and 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 \(OPS.131\) Balloon transport operations](#)
- [Worksheet \(OPS.131\) Balloon transport operations](#)

- [Air Operator's Certificate \(Balloon Operations\)/Associated Approvals form](#) (CASA-04-5664).

5. Scope

This protocol is for the assessment of an initial issue AOC application under Part 131 of CASR. This protocol may also be used for certain significant change variations to an existing AOC, such as:

- adding a new class of balloon
- adding a new area.
- any other matter requiring assessment under this protocol suite.

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.

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

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.

7. Associated legislation

Table 1. Legislation associated with this protocol

Document	Title
Part 5 of CAR	Balloon 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 131 of CASR	Balloons and hot air airships
Part 91 MOS	Part 91 (General operating and flight rules) Manual of Standards
Part 131 MOS	Part 131 (Balloons and hot air airships) Manual of Standards
CAO 40.7	Aircraft endorsements (balloons) and flight instructors (balloons) ratings
CASA EX81/21	Part 91 of CASR - Supplementary Exemptions and Directions Instrument 2021

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
AC 11-03	Electronically formatted certifications, records and management systems
AC 11-04	Approvals under CASR Parts 91, 103, 119, 121, 129, 131, 132, 133, 135, 138 and 149 (including MOS)
AC 91-03	Carriage of assistance animals
AC 91-18	Restraints of infants and children
Multi-part AC 91-19	Passenger safety information
AC 91-22	Aircraft checklists
AC 92-01	Dangerous goods training for employees
AC 92-02	Dangerous goods manuals
AC 92-03	Dangerous goods training courses and instructors
AC 131-01	Part 131 Manned free balloons - Continuing airworthiness
AC 131-02	Manned free balloons - Operations
AC 131-04	Management of change for balloon transport AOC holders
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
Part 131 AMC/GM	Acceptable means of compliance and guidance material—Balloons and hot air airships

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 8	Airworthiness of Aircraft
Annex 18	The safe transport of dangerous goods by air

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
1.0	May 2024	All	First release