

**Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration**

**Plan for Increasing the Public Availability
of Information about Agency Operations**

February 11, 2016

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Executive Summary

This plan responds to a March 20, 2015 memorandum from the Department of Transportation General Counsel and Chief Information Officer that requires each Operating Administration to develop a specific action plan for making “in demand” information publicly available on an ongoing basis.

The Federal Aviation Administration currently publishes an enormous amount of “in demand” information on its public website. When the FAA anticipates significant demand for specific information, the agency generally proactively posts that information on its website at the same time it provides that information to Congress, the press or industry.

A number of years ago, the FAA began posting annual [laser incident databases](#) at the end of each year because of the demand for information about laser strikes on airplanes. As unmanned aircraft incidents have increased, the FAA is developing a similar process to regularly post [pilot sightings of unmanned aircraft](#). However, each of these activities has presented unique challenges because of the type of information involved. It took time to determine the best way to post the information on an ongoing basis.

Key Findings:

- Posting high-demand information generally helps manage the demand for information, reduces FAA workload and makes it available to all stakeholders at the same time.
- Posting information that involves ongoing reporting and data collection presents a much higher FAA workload to collect, manage and update than static information, so may carry ongoing associated costs.

1.0 Understanding Data in Demand

1.1 Review of Existing Practices

Following are several examples of current releases that have made the FAA more efficient and/or were responsive to a demonstrated need for the information.

Exemptions the FAA has granted to operate unmanned aircraft commercially. These are called “Section 333 Exemptions” because of the section of the last FAA Reauthorization bill that granted the FAA authority to issue them. The FAA has issued more than 1,500 of these exemptions in the past year. There is enormous interest in these exemptions from the general public, the media and the unmanned aircraft industry. The FAA keeps this information current by monitoring it on a weekly basis.

http://www.faa.gov/uas/legislative_programs/section_333/

Pilot reports of unmanned aircraft sightings. This database includes a brief synopsis of the pilot report for each incident, the date and the location. Congress, the media and others regularly ask for the cumulative number of these incidents and the incident reports. The FAA is developing a separate page to house this data and will keep this information current by updating it on a monthly basis.

<http://www.faa.gov/news/updates/?newsId=83544>

Aircraft tail number search. This is currently the top activity on www.faa.gov. Through web analytics monitoring several years ago, we realized that many people wanted to search for the records associated with an aircraft tail number, so we made it easier to find by featuring a quick search box on our homepage. The FAA keeps this information current by updating it on a weekly basis.

<http://www.faa.gov/>

1.2 Improving Current Practices

The FAA identifies information/data in demand for posting by regularly reviewing (a) web analytics for its various web pages, (b) FOIA logs, (c) public, press, and congressional inquiries to Public Affairs, Governmental Affairs, and program offices. The web team works with the Office of Communications and other appropriate offices to ensure that content is updated.

2.0 Meeting Mandatory Posting Requirements

2.1 Congressional Reports

The FAA will post all Congressional reports on [a central website](#) within one month of finalizing and they will be available by search.

2.2 Congressional Testimony

The FAA will post all congressional testimony on its [Testimony page](#).

2.3 Freedom of Information Act Request Logs

The FAA will post a log of its Fiscal Year 2014 FOIA requests by April 15, 2016 and will post the Fiscal Year 2015 FOIA requests by June 15, 2016, and will then post annual reports by January 15 following the previous fiscal year. The FOIA logs would be posted in the [FAA FOIA Electronic Reading Room](#) under Category 4 – Frequently Requested Records

2.4 Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room

The FAA's process for ensuring that statutorily-mandated [FOIA Electronic Reading Room](#) records are current (four categories, including "frequently requested records") as outlined in 5 U.S.C. § 552 includes regular meetings of the FOIA office and the Office of Communication's Web Management Services to review the content and presentation to ensure compliance with the FOIA and user-friendly web practices.

The FAA has revamped its FOIA Electronic Reading Room to conform more with the FOIA Library concept as advocated by the Department of Justice.

3.0 Considering Additional Items for Posting

3.1 Funding and/or Apportionment Tables

The FAA posts its funding/apportionment tables related to its [Airport Improvement Program](#), which is the agency's only program of this type.

3.2 Correspondence Logs

The FAA is considering the possibility of posting correspondence logs and has not made a final determination.

4.0 Protecting Sensitive Information from Release

The FAA ensures that private, privileged, or other sensitive data (such as information protected by the Privacy Act or Trade Secrets Act) is not posted on its websites by providing appropriate training for employees and using web-scrubbing tools that automatically identify information in a form that appears to be sensitive – such as Social Security Numbers or birthdays.

The FAA uses a centralized content posting and review process for the majority of its web content. Before posting, AOC web content managers review all information and ensure it contains no labels indicating it is protected content. The FAA is deploying a content management system (CMS) in early 2016. Workflow processes to ensure the integrity and quality of the data will be a part of the new system. The FAA also has implemented data loss prevention tools to help avoid inadvertent disclosure of protected information through outgoing emails. Starting in FY 2016, the FAA will begin conducting regular privacy scans of the website.

5.0 New Initiatives

Following is a description of a **new** information and/or data release that will make the FAA more efficient, results in a new disclosure or significantly improves current disclosure, and is responsive to a demonstrated need for the information.

- We are creating a team from a number of offices to determine how we might best handle posting of FOIA and correspondence log data.
- We continue to improve our processes and speed in disseminating Section 333 Authorizations via the web. We currently post the exemptions faster than [Regulations.gov](#) updates the docket folder and are keeping up with exponential increases in content postings and a demand for the information. The demand for the information has been very high and continues to grow with 254,923 downloads of Section 333 authorization PDFs in FY 2015.
- We are also in the process of making our airport delay status available through social media. In the upcoming weeks the public will be able to receive real time updates of all U.S. Airport delays and closures to by following FAA's Twitter channel.

6.0 Conclusion

The FAA has made significant strides in proactive disclosure of “in-demand” information and is continuing to explore new ways to make more information available.