



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Transportation and Communications  
**AIR TRANSPORTATION OFFICE**  
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# **Advisory Circular**

**AC 139-01-A**

**AN OVERVIEW OF  
AERODROME REGULATION**

**May 2008**

Advisory Circulars (AC) are intended to provide recommendations and guidance to illustrate a means, but not necessarily the only means, of complying with regulatory requirements, or to explain certain regulatory requirements by providing interpretative and explanatory material.

ATO will generally accept that when the provisions of an Advisory Circular have been met, compliance with the relevant regulatory obligation has been satisfied.

Where an AC is referred to in a 'Note' within regulatory documentation, the AC remains as guidance material.

ACs should always be read in conjunction with the referenced regulations.

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## 1. REFERENCES

- 1.1 This document may refer to portions of the following:
- Republic Act 776 as amended;
  - Civil Aviation Authority Act of 2008;
  - Administrative Order 139;
  - Manual of Standards for Aerodromes; and
  - ICAO Annex 14 Volume 1 4<sup>th</sup> Edition as amended.

## 2. PURPOSE

2.1 Republic of the Philippines has developed a multi-tier system for regulating aerodromes as prescribed in AO 139. The new aerodrome regulatory system will affect all existing aerodromes in some way. The multi-tier system is in recognition of the fact that there is a great disparity among aerodromes which have been established to serve a nation with an uneven spread of population and with a large geographical area. The rules governing aerodromes serving major cities and supporting busy international operations are necessarily more complex than those governing less busy aerodromes supporting only domestic air transport activities, which in turn will be more involved than the rules applicable to small aerodromes only occasionally used by light aircraft. This Advisory Circular (AC) provides aerodrome operators, aircraft operators and pilots with an overview of the general obligations relating to aerodromes as encapsulated in the aerodrome regulatory system. It is stressed that the regulations must always be read for complete and detailed information on requirements.

## 3. STATUS OF THIS AC

3.1 ACs are numbered to reflect the regulatory basis, the serial number of the circular issued for that regulation and the revision status for that AC. In this case the regulatory basis is AO 139, this is the first AC to be issued regarding AO 139 and it is revision A. Consequently the status of this AC is 139-01-A.

## 4. THE AERODROME REGULATORY SYSTEM AS PRESCRIBED IN AO 139

4.1 The main changes brought about by AO 139 are intended to modernize the preceding ATO rules (AO 5), thus ensuring there is conformity with the standards and recommended practices as described in ICAO Annex 14 Volume 1, Aerodromes, and also to provide for the specific conditions experienced in the Philippines. These changes require that some aerodromes shall be certified or registered.

4.2 An aerodrome must be certified when it is used by aircraft conducting any:

- (a) international air transport operations; or
- (b) domestic air transport operations by aircraft with more than 30 passenger seats.

4.3 Aerodrome operators need to register an aerodrome when the aerodrome is:

- (a) used by aircraft conducting any domestic air transport operations with aircraft certified for between 10 and 30 (inclusive) passengers; or
- (b) not certified, but open to public use with a published instrument approach procedure.

4.3 Other aerodrome operators may apply to have their aerodromes certificated or registered. All certified and registered aerodromes will be subject to audit and inspection by ATO inspectors from time to time.

4.4 For aerodromes not covered by AO 139, the responsibility for ensuring that aerodromes meet minimum safety standards rests with aircraft operators who use those aerodromes. The Manual of Standards for Aerodromes (MOS) provides required standards for aerodromes used by aircraft not exceeding 5700kg. Aerodromes that are not certified or registered may still be audited by ATO through an audit of the airline or aircraft operator, or by an aerodrome inspector.

4.5 Operators of certified aerodromes will need to develop and implement an acceptable safety management system (SMS) defining the way the aerodrome operational safety is managed.

4.6 AO 139 also introduced a number of changes to the way certified aerodromes are to be managed and operated. These include:

- (a) Responsibility for an Aerodrome Manual. The Aerodrome Manual will need to set out the aerodrome administration structure and clearly nominate a person who will be responsible for ensuring that relevant aeronautical information, including all changed data, is included in the aerodrome manual, is accurate and brought to the attention of relevant persons.
- (b) Training of key aerodrome personnel. AO 139 requires certified aerodrome operators to be able to demonstrate that key aerodrome personnel, viz. reporting officers and works safety officers, are trained to perform their functions. This requirement is also applicable to registered aerodromes.
- (c) Annual aerodrome technical inspection report. The technical inspection reports are meant to demonstrate that the aerodrome operator has arranged periodic internal audits of the aerodrome by qualified persons, and that appropriate remedial actions have been taken to arrest deterioration of the aerodrome. The technical inspection reports must be kept for at least 3 years and are subject to ATO audit.

4.7 For registered aerodromes, a quality assurance scheme has been introduced which requires these aerodromes to be inspected either by an ATO Inspector or a person approved by ATO (Approved Persons). This scheme allows ATO to check that persons originating and verifying important aerodrome operational information are able to perform that function and their continued approval will be subject to periodic ATO audit.

## 5. REGISTERED AERODROMES

5.1 This option is provided for non-certified aerodromes used by aircraft with between 10 and 30 (inclusive) passenger seats to be incorporated within the regulated aerodrome system. Registration is less complicated than certification because there is no requirement for registered aerodromes to have an aerodrome manual or safety management system. Where practicable, operators of registered aerodromes are encouraged to document procedures. The aim of the registration scheme is to ensure the safety status of non-certified aerodromes is at a level appropriate for public use. This scheme is predicated on the aerodrome operator meeting a number of registration conditions.

5.2 When an aerodrome is registered, it signifies that the aerodrome has been checked and verified by a ATO Inspector or a qualified person approved by ATO. The aerodrome operational information published in AIP should therefore be accurate and can be used by aircraft operators and pilots with confidence. In addition, there should be a trained person called a "reporting officer" who will monitor the on-going serviceability of the aerodrome, such that, if there are any changes to the aerodrome conditions which can affect aircraft operations, the matter will be notified through the NOTAM system.

5.3 Application for registration of an aerodrome must be accompanied by a safety inspection report of the aerodrome carried out by an ATO Inspector or a person approved by ATO. Refer to Advisory Circular 139-03-A "Application for approval to conduct aerodrome safety inspections of registered and certain other aerodromes".

5.4 Registered aerodromes used by aircraft with more than 9 passenger seats will also be required to be inspected and reported on by an ATO Inspector, or a qualified person approved by ATO, on an annual basis.

5.5 Although ATO may have a scheduled audit program for registered aerodromes, these aerodromes are still subject to ATO unscheduled audit and registration may be cancelled if the conditions for registration are not met. An ATO unscheduled audit can be initiated for various reasons, including but not limited to, receipt of adverse pilot advice, as a part of the audit of the approved person who has verified the aerodrome, or as a part of the audit of an airline that operates into the aerodrome.

## 6. OTHER AERODROMES USED IN AIR TRANSPORT OPERATIONS

6.1 MOS requires the operator of a non-certificated and non-registered aerodrome, used by aircraft with a maximum takeoff weight less than 5700 kg, to ensure the standards associated with the aerodrome and its facilities are suitable for the type of aircraft that operate at the aerodrome.

6.2 These aerodromes do not have information published in AIP and the aircraft operator must have a reporting system in place to ensure that the pilot has adequate information about the aerodrome and its current serviceability status prior to operations being conducted.

## 7. ATO APPROVED PERSONS TO CONDUCT SAFETY INSPECTIONS

7.1 AO 139 empowers ATO to issue approval to persons to conduct safety inspections of aerodromes in the "registered" category. The aim of this scheme is to allow ATO to regulate persons providing the aerodrome inspection service. This is an aviation safety related service as the end result of the service is direct input of aerodrome operational information used in aircraft operations.

7.2 This approval scheme is not yet established. Until the scheme is implemented, ATO will conduct inspections or accept safety inspection reports prepared by a person meeting the requirements of AO 139.

7.3 Guidelines on how to become an approved person are given in Advisory Circular AC 139-03-A "Application for approval to conduct aerodrome safety inspections of registered and certain other aerodromes".

## 8. AERODROME STANDARDS

8.1 In general, the physical standards for movement area and other aerodrome facilities, as specified in MOS, are related to the category of the largest and most critical aircraft using the aerodrome, irrespective of the status of the aerodrome, whether it is certified, registered or other.

8.2 The applicability of operating standards as applied to certified, registered and other aerodromes will vary, as the management and operational effort involved has to be commensurate with the level of aircraft activities and the size and complexity of the aerodrome.

8.3 Chapter 13 of MOS sets out the aerodrome standards for aerodromes used by aircraft of not more than 5700 kg engaged in air transport operations operating under an air operators certificate.

## 9. EXEMPTIONS

- 9.1 An aerodrome facility which does not meet current standards may be exempted where:
- (a) it was an existing facility and the standard change does not warrant immediate rectification of the facility – ‘grandfather provision’;
  - (b) full compliance is impracticable, and intent of the standard has been addressed by an acceptable alternative means;
  - (c) full compliance is impracticable, but the risk is mitigated by the introduction of certain aerodrome or aircraft operational procedures; and
  - (d) the risk is assessed by ATO to be low due to infrequent activity levels and the type of aircraft activity.

9.2 AO 139 empowers ATO to grant exemptions where a regulatory requirement or standard cannot be met due to exceptional circumstances. ATO exemptions are time limited and subject to review. MOS requires aerodrome operators to demonstrate that efforts are being made to bring non-standard aerodrome facilities up to standard. Efforts made should be reasonable, commensurate with the degree and nature of usage of the facility and the risk that the non-standard facility poses to the safety of aircraft operations.

9.3 MOS requires non standard facilities at certified aerodromes to be identified and recorded in the Aerodrome Manual, together with the date or period when those facilities were first introduced or last upgraded. The aerodrome operator is required to provide an indication of how each non standard facility will be made to comply with the standard, including, where possible, a plan or timescale.

## 10. AERODROME SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

10.1 AO 139 requires operators of certificated aerodromes to have in place an acceptable aerodrome safety management system (SMS).

10.2 ATO will issue guidelines on SMS from time to time. Currently there are mandatory standards on the SMS contained in MOS.

## 11. FURTHER INFORMATION

11.1 This overview is aimed at addressing general issues likely to be encountered by aerodrome operators as AO 139 is implemented. Please refer to the ATO Executive Director for specific individual aerodrome matters not covered by this AC.

By authority of the Secretary, DOTC



DANIEL A. DIMAGIBA  
Executive Director  
Air Transportation Office

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