

International Civil Aviation Organization



ICAO

INFORMATION PAPER (IP/16)

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(MET SG/28)

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Agenda Item 6: Research, development, and other initiatives

APAC VAAC BACK-UP

(Presented by Australia, Japan, New Zealand)

SUMMARY

This paper outlines the recent back-up tests conducted by the APAC VAACs Darwin, Tokyo and Wellington, issues encountered, system and procedural changes, and tentative dates for any upcoming back-up tests.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Handbook on the International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW) – Operational Procedures and Contact List (Doc 9766) recommends that Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAACs) conduct back-up tests at least annually.

1.2 This paper contains information from VAAC Darwin, VAAC Tokyo and VAAC Wellington on their back-up tests and arrangements.

2. DISCUSSION

VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo back-up

2.1 VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo conducted a back-up test on 28 June 2023. A full test was carried out to test new procedures after the review of back-up documentation. There were over 10 responses from operators to each VAAC for positive receipt. The VAACs are hoping for an improvement on this in the next back-up test.

2.2 In January 2024, VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo reviewed the Scheme of Cooperation which underpins the back-up arrangements between the two VAACs. This includes a review of the AFTN dissemination lists. VAAC Tokyo is setting a channel and chat in MS Teams between the two VAACs which will be tested before putting into operation.

2.3 VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo are planning to conduct a back-up test on 27 June 2024 and also test the new MS Teams channel.

2.4 Back-up operations by VAAC Tokyo for planned outages at VAAC Darwin were conducted on 15 November, 4 December 2023 and 25 March 2024. The back-up tests prepared the VAACs for a smooth operational back-up. No operational advisories were issued.

VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington back-up

2.5 VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington conducted their annual back-up test on 14 May 2024. VAAC Darwin successfully issued a VAA on behalf of VAAC Wellington, though the response rate from recipients was low. VAAC Wellington was unable to send the VAA on behalf of VAAC Darwin. The WMO header for VAAC Darwin (FVAU05 ADRM) was discovered to be hardcoded into the forecasting software. On this occasion, VAAC Darwin was using that WMO header number for an active product and VAAC Wellington was unable to adjust the header to an available number.

2.6 VAAC Wellington have a fix for the issue which will be implemented soon following testing. The two VAACs will do another back-up test once the issue has been resolved. The back-up test would involve issuing one product per VAAC to test the dissemination.

2.7 Back-up operations for VAAC Darwin occurred on 15 November 2023, 4 December 2023 and 25 March 2024 due to planned outages at VAAC Darwin. The back-up tests prepared the VAACs for a smooth operational back-up. No operational advisories were issued.

2.8 Back-up operations for VAAC Wellington occurred on 3 June 2024 due to an unplanned power outage. VAAC Darwin provided back-up support for around 2.5 hours. This was done smoothly due to the close working relation and testing between the two VAACs. No operational advisories were issued.

2.9 VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington plan to reach out to users in the APAC region to update the list of e-mails for operational units so they can receive the pre-notification correspondence for scheduled back-up tests.

VAAC Darwin and VAAC Washington back-up

2.10 VAAC Darwin, VAAC Montreal and VAAC Washington have been carrying out back-up tests every 3 months for the VAAC Washington area of responsibility. The last back-up test was conducted on 6 December 2023. Instead of the regular back-up test, the VAAC Darwin staff issued a real advisory for one of the VAAC Washington volcanoes (Santa Maria, Guatemala) and the dissemination was tracked to a number of locations. A corresponding WV SIGMET was issued for the advisory which indicated that the associated MWO had received the advisory issued under back-up. The VAACs are planning to conduct another back-up test in the near future.

2.11 VAAC Darwin has updated its operational advisory webpage so that all back-up products now appear on the webpage.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 Note the information contained in this paper.
