



Aeronautical Chart User's Guide

13th Edition





**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Aeronautical Information Services

Aeronautical Chart User's Guide

Effective as of 25 April 2019

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
KEEP YOUR CHARTS CURRENT	7
EFFECTIVE DATE OF CHART USER'S GUIDE AND UPDATES	7
COLOR VARIATION.....	7
REPORTING CHART DISCREPANCIES.....	7
WHAT'S NEW?	9
VFR CHARTS.....	9
IFR ENROUTE CHARTS	9
TERMINAL PROCEDURE PUBLICATIONS (TPPS).....	9
EXPLANATION OF VFR TERMS AND SYMBOLS	11
WATER FEATURES (HYDROGRAPHY)	11
LAND FEATURES (TERRAIN) AND OBSTRUCTIONS.....	11
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION	15
AIRPORTS	15
AIRSPACE.....	17
TERMINAL AREA CHART (TAC) COVERAGE	20
INSET AND SPECIAL CHART COVERAGE.....	20
CHART TABULATIONS.....	20
CARIBBEAN VFR AERONAUTICAL CHARTS (CAC)	22
VFR SECTIONAL AND TERMINAL AREA CHARTS	23
AIRPORTS	23
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION	25
AIRSPACE INFORMATION.....	26
NAVIGATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION	32
CULTURE.....	34
HYDROGRAPHY	37
RELIEF	40
VFR FLYWAY PLANNING CHARTS	43
GENERAL INFORMATION.....	43
AIRPORTS	43
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION	43
AIRSPACE INFORMATION.....	44
NAVIGATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION	47
CULTURE.....	47
BOUNDARIES.....	47
HYDROGRAPHY	48
RELIEF	48
HELICOPTER ROUTE CHARTS	49
GENERAL INFORMATION.....	49
AIRPORTS	49
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION	50
AIRSPACE INFORMATION.....	51

Table of Contents

NAVIGATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION	54
CULTURE	55
AIRSPACE	57
EXPLANATION OF IFR ENROUTE TERMS	59
AIRPORTS	59
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION	61
AIRSPACE INFORMATION.....	62
INSTRUMENT AIRWAYS	64
TERRAIN CONTOURS ON AREA CHARTS.....	67
AIRPORTS	69
IFR ENROUTE LOW / HIGH ALTITUDE SYMBOLS (U.S., PACIFIC AND ALASKA CHARTS)	69
RADIO AIDS TO NAVIGATION	70
AIRSPACE INFORMATION.....	75
NAVIGATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION	88
CULTURE.....	89
HYDROGRAPHY	89
TOPOGRAPHY	89
U.S. TERMINAL PROCEDURES PUBLICATION	91
EXPLANATION OF TPP TERMS AND SYMBOLS	91
INSTRUMENT APPROACH PROCEDURE CHART.....	92
PLANVIEW.....	98
NAVAIDS	101
MISSED APPROACH INFORMATION.....	107
PROFILE VIEW.....	108
LANDING MINIMUMS.....	111
AIRPORT SKETCH	113
AIRPORT DIAGRAMS	114
DEPARTURE PROCEDURES (DPs).....	116
STANDARD TERMINAL ARRIVAL (STARs) CHARTS.....	117
CHARTED VISUAL FLIGHT PROCEDURE (CVFP) CHARTS.....	117
U.S. TERMINAL PROCEDURES PUBLICATION SYMBOLS	119
GENERAL INFORMATION.....	119
LEGEND - STANDARD TERMINAL ARRIVAL (STAR) CHARTS - DEPARTURE PROCEDURE (DP) CHARTS.....	119
APPROACH LIGHTING SYSTEM.....	120
AIRPORT DIAGRAM/AIRPORT SKETCH	122
PLANVIEW SYMBOLS.....	123
PROFILE VIEW.....	125
COLD TEMPERATURE AIRPORTS.....	126

Table of Contents

REFERENCES	127
ABBREVIATIONS	129
A	129
B	129
C	129
D	129
E	129
F	129
G	129
H	129
I	129
K	130
L	130
M	130
N	130
O	130
P	130
R	130
S	130
T	131
U	131
V	131
W	131

INTRODUCTION

This Chart User's Guide is an introduction to the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) aeronautical charts and publications. It is useful to new pilots as a learning aid, and to experienced pilots as a quick reference guide.

The FAA is the source for all data and information utilized in the publishing of aeronautical charts through authorized publishers for each stage of Visual Flight Rules (VFR) and Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) air navigation including training, planning, and departures, enroute (for low and high altitudes), approaches, and taxiing charts. Digital charts are available online at:

- VFR Charts - https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/vfr/
- IFR Charts - https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/ifr/
- Terminal Procedures Publication - http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/dtpp/
- Chart Supplements - https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/dafd/

Paper copies of the charts are available through an FAA Approved Print Provider. A complete list of current providers is available at http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/print_providers/

The FAA Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM) Pilot/Controller Glossary defines in detail, all terms and abbreviations used throughout this publication. Unless otherwise indicated, miles are nautical miles (NM), altitudes indicate feet above Mean Sea Level (MSL), and times used are Coordinated Universal Time (UTC).

The Notices to Airmen Publication (NOTAM) includes current Flight Data Center (FDC) NOTAMs. NOTAMs alert pilots of new regulatory requirements and reflect changes to Standard Instrument Approach Procedures (SIAPs), flight restrictions, and aeronautical chart revisions. This publication is prepared every 28 days by the FAA, and is available by subscription from the Government Printing Office. For more information on subscribing or to access online PDF copy, http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/notices/

In addition to NOTAMs, the Chart Supplement and the Safety Alerts/Charting Notices page of the Aeronautical Information Services website are also useful to pilots

KEEP YOUR CHARTS CURRENT

Aeronautical information changes rapidly, so it is important that pilots check the effective dates on each aeronautical chart and publication. To avoid danger, it is important to always use current editions and discard obsolete charts and publications.

To confirm that a chart or publication is current, refer to the next scheduled edition date printed on the cover. Pilots should also check Aeronautical Chart Bulletins and NOTAMs for important updates between chart and publication cycles that are essential for safe flight.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF CHART USER'S GUIDE AND UPDATES

All information in this guide is effective as of **25 April 2019**. All graphics used in this guide are for educational purposes. Chart symbology may not be to scale. Please do not use them for flight navigation.

The Chart User's Guide is updated as necessary when there is new chart symbology or changes in the depiction of information and/or symbols on the charts. When there are changes, it will be in accordance with the 56-day aeronautical chart product schedule.

COLOR VARIATION

Although the digital files are compiled in accordance with charting specifications, the final product may vary slightly in appearance due to differences in printing techniques/processes and/or digital display techniques.

REPORTING CHART DISCREPANCIES

Your experience as a pilot is valuable and your feedback is important. We make every effort to display accurate information on all FAA charts and publications, so we appreciate your input. Please notify us concerning any requests for changes, or potential discrepancies you see while using our charts and related products.

*FAA, Aeronautical Information Services
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SSMC4 Suite 4400
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3281*

*Telephone Toll-Free 1-800-638-8972
Aeronautical Inquires: http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/aero_data/Aeronautical_Inquiries/*

WHAT'S NEW?

Update as of 25 April 2019

The following charting items have been added to the Online Chart User's Guide since the Guide was last published on 13 September 2018:

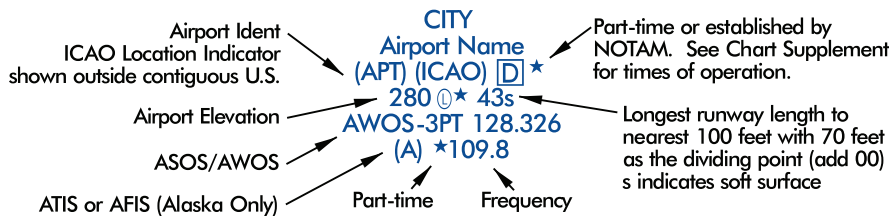
VFR CHARTS

No Changes Applied

IFR ENROUTE CHARTS

INCLUSION OF ASOS/AWOS IN THE AIRPORT DATA BLOCK

Chart users have identified the need for more weather source on charts. In response, Enroute Charting has begun including ASOS/AWOS system type and frequency to the existing airport data block on Enroute Low Charts when an on-airport automated weather system is present.



TERMINAL PROCEDURE PUBLICATIONS (TPPS)

COMPARABLE VALUES OF RUNWAY VISUAL RANGE (RVR) AND VISIBILITY

Runway Visual Range (RVR) values have been revised in order to harmonize the values in the Comparable Values of RVR and Visibility table that is published in the Legend of the TPP with the values that are published in FAA Order 8260.3C. The Table that has previously been published in the TPP did not contain all of the values used in the 8260.3C so sometimes the next higher RVR value had to be used to determine the visibility that is published on the chart. This can result in visibility values that are unnecessarily high. In order to resolve this problem, the missing RVR values have been added to the table in the TPP and the affected IAP Charts have been revised with the new visibility values.

Comparable Values of RVR and Visibility

The following table shall be used for converting RVR to ground or flight visibility. For converting RVR values that fall between listed values, use the next higher RVR value; do not interpolate. For example, when converting 4800 RVR, use 5000 RVR with the resultant visibility of 1 mile.

RVR (feet)	Visibility (SM)	RVR (feet)	Visibility (SM)	RVR (feet)	Visibility (SM)	RVR (feet)	Visibility (SM)
1600	¼	2400	½	3500	⅝	5500	1
1800	½	2600	½	4000	¾	6000	1¼
2000	½	3000	⅝	4500	⅞		
2200	½	3200	⅝	5000	1		

EXPLANATION OF VFR TERMS AND SYMBOLS

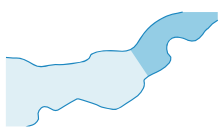
This chapter covers the Sectional Aeronautical Chart (Sectional). These charts include the most current data at a scale of (1:500,000) which is large enough to be read easily by pilots flying by sight under Visual Flight Rules. Sectionals are named after a major city within its area of coverage.

The chart legend includes aeronautical symbols and information about drainage, terrain, the contour of the land, and elevation. You can learn to identify aeronautical, topographical, and obstruction symbols (such as radio and television towers) by using the legend.

A brief description next to a small black square indicates the exact location for many of the landmarks easily recognized from the air, such as stadiums, pumping stations, refineries, etc. A small black open circle with descriptive type indicates oil, gas or mineral wells. A small black circle with descriptive type indicates water, oil or gas tanks. The scale for some items may be increased to make them easier to read on the chart.

Aeronautical Information Services' charts are prepared in accordance with specifications of the Interagency Air Committee (IAC) and are approved by representatives of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

WATER FEATURES (HYDROGRAPHY)



Water features are depicted using two tones of blue, and are considered either "Open Water" or "Inland Water." "Open Water," a lighter blue tone, shows the shoreline limitations of all coastal water features at the average (mean) high water levels for oceans and seas. Light blue also represents the connecting waters like bays, gulfs, sounds and large estuaries.

Exceptionally large lakes like the Great Lakes, Great Salt Lake, and Lake Okeechobee, etc., are considered Open Water features. The Open Water tone extends inland as far as necessary to adjoin the darker blue "Inland Water" tones. All other bodies of water are marked as "Inland Water" in the darker blue tone.

LAND FEATURES (TERRAIN) AND OBSTRUCTIONS

The elevation and configuration of the Earth's surface is important to pilots. Our Aeronautical Information Specialists are devoted to showing the contour of the earth and any obstructions clearly and accurately on our charts. We use five different techniques: contour lines, shaded relief, color tints, obstruction symbols, and Maximum Elevation Figures (MEF).

1. Contour lines join points of equal elevation. On Sectionals, basic contours are spaced at 500' intervals. Intermediate contours are typically at 250' intervals in moderately level or gently rolling areas. Auxiliary contours at 50', 100', 125', or 150' intervals occasionally show smaller relief features in areas of relatively low relief. The pattern of these lines and their spacing gives the pilot a visual concept of the terrain. Widely spaced contours represent gentle slopes, while closely spaced contours represent steep slopes.



2. Shaded relief shows how terrain may appear from the air. Shadows are shown as if light is coming from the northwest, because studies have shown that our visual perception has been conditioned to this view.
3. Different color tints show bands of elevation relative to sea level. These colors range from light green for the lower elevations, to dark brown for the higher elevations.



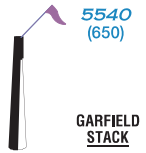
- Obstruction symbols show man made vertical features that could affect safe navigation. FAA's Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM) maintains a database of over obstacles in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico and U.S. Pacific Island Territories. Aeronautical Specialists evaluate each obstacle based on charting specifications before adding it to a visual chart. When a Specialist is not able to verify the position or elevation of an obstacle, it is marked UC, meaning it is "under construction" or being reported, but has not been verified.

The FAA uses a Digital Obstacle File (DOF) to collect and disseminate data. Because land and obstructions frequently change, the source data on obstructions and terrain is occasionally incomplete or not accurate enough for use in aeronautical publications. For example, when the FAA receives notification about an obstruction, and there is insufficient detail to determine its position and elevation, the FAA Flight Edit Program conducts an investigation.

The Flight Edit crew visually verifies the cultural, topographic, and obstacle data. Charts are generally flight-checked every four years. This review includes checking for any obstruction that has been recently built, altered, or dismantled without proper notification.



- Obstacles less than 1000' AGL.* Sectional Charts, Terminal Area (TACs) and Caribbean Charts (CACs) typically show manmade obstacles extending more than 200' Above Ground Level (AGL), or more than 299' AGL in yellow city tint. Features considered to be hazardous obstacles to low-level flight are; smokestacks, tanks, factories, lookout towers, and antennas, etc.
- Obstacles 1000' AGL or greater.* Manmade features used by FAA Air Traffic Control as checkpoints use a graphic symbol shown in black with the required elevation data in blue. The elevation of the top of the obstacle above Mean Sea Level (MSL) and the height of the structure (AGL) is also indicated (when known or can be reliably determined by a Specialist). The AGL height is in parentheses below the MSL elevation. In extremely congested areas, the FAA typically omits the AGL values to avoid confusion.



Manmade features used by FAA Air Traffic Control as checkpoints use a graphic symbol shown in black with the required elevation data in blue. The elevation of the top of the obstacle above Mean Sea Level (MSL) and the height of the structure (AGL) is also indicated (when known or can be reliably determined by a Specialist). The AGL height is in parentheses below the MSL elevation. In extremely congested areas, the FAA typically omits the AGL values to avoid confusion.

- Group Obstacle Symbol* 4977 (1432) Whenever possible, the FAA depicts specific obstacles on charts. However, in high-density areas like city complexes, only the highest obstacle is represented on the chart using the group obstacle symbol to maximize legibility.

Obstacles under construction are indicated by placing the letters UC adjacent to the obstacle type.

- Obstacles with high-intensity strobe lighting systems may operate part-time or by proximity activation and are shown as follows:

Guy wires may extend outward from obstacles.

5000 (1500) UC
If space is available, the AGL height of the obstruction is shown

- The Maximum Elevation Figure (MEF) represents the highest elevation within a quadrant, including terrain and other vertical obstacles (towers, trees, etc.). A quadrant on Sectionals is the area bounded by ticked lines dividing each 30 minutes of latitude and each 30 minutes of longitude. MEF figures are rounded up to the nearest 100' value and the last two digits of the number are not shown.

12⁵
In this example the MEF represents 12,500'.

MEFs over land and open water areas are used in areas containing manmade obstacles such as oil rigs.

In the determination of MEFs, the FAA uses extreme care to calculate the values based on the existing elevation data shown on source material. Aeronautical Information Specialists use the following procedure to calculate MEFs:

MEF - Manmade Obstacle

When a manmade obstacle is more than 200' above the highest terrain within the quadrant:

1. Determine the elevation of the top of the obstacle above MSL.
2. Add the possible vertical error of the source material to the above figure (100' or 1/2 contour interval when interval on source exceeds 200'. U.S. Geological Survey Quadrangle Maps with contour intervals as small as 10' are normally used).
3. Round the resultant figure up to the next higher hundred-foot level.

Example:

Elevation of obstacle top (MSL)	2649
Possible obstacle error	+100
equals	2749
Raise to the following 100' level	2800
Maximum Elevation Figure (MEF)	28



Aeronautical Chart User's Guide 13th Edition

*The definitive FAA reference source for understanding
and interpretation of all aviation charts*



**Aeronautical Information Services
Federal Aviation Administration**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) publishes aeronautical charts for each stage of visual (VFR) and instrument (IFR) flight, including training, planning, departure, enroute (low and high altitude), approach, and taxiing. This guide is an excellent reference for novice and experienced pilots alike, as well as for international pilots becoming familiar with U.S. charts. This 13th Edition of the *Aeronautical Chart User's Guide* is the definitive learning aid, reference document, and introduction to the wealth of information provided on FAA charts and in chart navigation publications.

Produced by the FAA's Aeronautical Information Services branch, it explains all the symbology for FAA sectional, world, terminal area, flyway planning, helicopter route, enroute low- and high-altitude, and oceanic route charts, as well as standard terminal arrival routes, standard instrument departures, and instrument approach procedures. Also includes chart legends, airspace classification tables, and is illustrated throughout with full-color graphics.

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