



**NASA  
Policy  
Directive**

**NPD 7900.4D**  
 Effective Date: July 07, 2014  
 Expiration Date: July 07, 2019

**COMPLIANCE IS MANDATORY**

[Printable Format \(PDF\)](#)

Request Notification of Change (NASA Only)

**Subject: NASA Aircraft Operations Management, Updated with Change 1, March 10, 2015**

**Responsible Office: Aircraft Management Division**

**Change Log**

Change #	Date	Description
1	3/10/2015	PP.1.a, Changed "resources" to "assets" for clarity.
1	3/10/2015	P.1.e, Changed "resources" to "assets" for clarity."
1	3/10/2015	P.1.e, Added "expected and" for clarity.
1	3/10/2015	P.3.a, Updated citation to "Title 49 U.S.C., Chapter 401, Sections 40102(a)(41) and 40125, Definition of Public Use Aircraft.""
1	3/10/2015	P.4.c, d, e, f, Updated NASA references, c. NPD 8700.1, d. NPR 1800.1, e. NPR 7900.3, f. NPR 8715.3."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.a (1), Changed "guidelines" to "policies" for clarity."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.a (2), Changed "including acquisition, utilization" to "acquisition, disposition" for clarity."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.a (2), Changed "control, and disposition and to approve aircraft acquisition and transfers, designate aircraft usage classifications, review and concur on aircraft contracts, and assign aircraft to the appropriate Center. Assignment of aircraft to Centers is a joint responsibility between the Assistant Administrator, OSI, and the Mission Directorate(s) requiring and funding the aircraft program(s)" to "and review and concur on aircraft contracts".
1	3/10/2015	P.5.e (1), Added "Aircraft Capability Leader and" for clarity per FMR 102-33.30."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.e (2), Added "Has the authority to approve aircraft acquisition, disposition, transfers, and assign aircraft to the appropriate Centers. Assignment of aircraft to Centers is a joint responsibility between the Aircraft Management Division and the Mission Directorate(s) requiring and funding the aircraft program(s)." to clarify responsibilities per Mission Support Council."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.e (4), Added "lead Agency aircraft team in development of roadmap of strategic goals to requirements and" to clarify responsibilities per Mission Support Council."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.e (4), Deleted "and recommend approval of proposed actions to the Assistant Administrator, OSI." to clarify responsibilities per Mission Support Council."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.g (7)(a), Added "aircraft operations and aviation" to clarify the safety risk analysis is aviation focused."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.g (7)(b), Added "Airworthiness" to clarify the Readiness review is aviation related."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.g (7)(b), Deleted "/or" for clarification purposes."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.i, Change "1800.1 to 7900" to update citation."
1	3/10/2015	P.5.i (1), Delete "such as 41 CFR, pt. 301-2" to eliminate confusion."

**Table of Contents**

**1. POLICY**

- a. This NASA Policy Directive (NPD) establishes policy for the management of NASA aircraft assets, aircraft operations, airworthiness, aviation safety, commercial aviation services, and related matters.
- b. All aircraft operations by or in support of NASA, including Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) operations and Commercial Aviation Services (CAS), will be conducted only for official purposes. Official purposes include the operation of Government aircraft for mission requirements and other official travel.
- c. All aircraft flights will be duly authorized and accomplished in airworthy aircraft operated by qualified flight crews in accordance with approved NASA and Federal laws, guidelines, regulations, and operational procedures.
- d. All aircraft flights with passengers embarked will comply with all applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations for civil use.
- e. NASA-owned aircraft, including UAS, are Agency-wide resources available to support all NASA programs and missions. NASA-owned aircraft also are Federal assets and may be made available to other Federal agencies in support of their missions. The Agency will efficiently and effectively utilize its aircraft assets to the maximum extent feasible. Cross-Center cooperation and utilization of aircraft assets is expected and required.
- f. All NASA aircraft services contracts and agreements will comply with NASA aircraft management policies established in this NPD and in NPR 7900.3.
- g. All aircraft operations conducted by or for NASA or sponsored by NASA are evaluated in advance and a determination made as to the flight being civil or public use. NASA has the responsibility for safety and airworthiness oversight of civil and public use flights (with the exception of scheduled airline passenger transportation). Advance coordination with the Center flight operations office or the Headquarters Aircraft Management Division (AMD) during the project planning phase is required for all NASA aircraft operations.
- h. NASA will take all necessary actions to prevent loss of life, personal injury, property loss, mission failure, or test failure.

**2. APPLICABILITY**

- a. This NPD is applicable to NASA Headquarters and NASA Centers, including Component Facilities and Technical and Service Support Centers.
- b. This language applies to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, NASA contractors operating NASA aircraft, grantees operating NASA aircraft, and partners under agreements such as memorandums of agreement or cooperative agreements only to the extent specified or referenced in the appropriate contracts, grants, or agreements. Any aircraft when owned, bailed, leased, loaned, chartered, rented, or operated under grant by NASA is considered a NASA aircraft.
- c. In this directive, all mandatory actions (i.e., requirements) are denoted by statements containing the term "shall." The terms: "may" or "can" denote discretionary privilege or permission, "should" denotes a good practice and is recommended, but not required, "will" denotes expected outcome, and "are/is" denotes descriptive material.d. In this directive, all document citations are assumed to be the latest version unless otherwise noted.

**3. AUTHORITY**

- a. National Aeronautics and Space Act, 51 U.S.C. § 20113 (a).
- b. Management of Government Aircraft, 41 CFR, pt. 102-33, Federal Management Regulation (FMR).
- c. OMB Circular A-126 (Revised), Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft. Title 49 U.S.C., Chapter 401, Sections 40102(a)(41) and 40125, Definition of Public Use of Aircraft.

**4. APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS AND FORMS**

- a. Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel Allowances, General Rules [General Services Administration (GSA)], 41 CFR, pt. 301-2.
- b. Contracts for Transportation or for Transportation-Related Services, NASA FAR Supplement, 48 CFR, subpt. 1847.2.
- c. NPD 8700.1, NASA Policy for Safety and Mission Success.
- d. NPR 1800.1, NASA Occupational Health Program Procedures.
- e. NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management Manual.
- f. NPR 8715.3, NASA General Safety Program Requirements.

**5. RESPONSIBILITY**

- a. The Assistant Administrator, Office of Strategic Infrastructure (OSI):
  - (1) Shall ensure that the Administrator is kept fully informed of significant matters relating to NASA aviation and for ensuring that the policies herein are in compliance with applicable Federal policies.
  - (2) Has the authority to establish policies for aircraft life-cycle management, acquisition, disposition, operation, maintenance, modification, the NASA Aircraft Management Information System (NAMIS), and review and concur on aircraft contracts.
  - (3) Shall review and concur on all Headquarters-generated contracts or agreements that include aviation operations prior to contract award.
- b. The Chief, Safety and Mission Assurance, is the focal point for aviation safety and shall establish aviation safety policy, such as NPD 8700.1, NASA Policy for Safety and Mission Success and NPR 8715.3, NASA General Safety Program Requirements, and oversee its implementation through verification of effective aviation safety programs throughout the Agency.
- c. The Associate Administrators (AAs) of Mission Directorates are responsible for establishing and documenting aircraft mission requirements and funding to support those requirements, including oversight of CAS. AAs shall:
  - (1) Coordinate with OSI as early as possible in the planning process when establishing program or project plans that involve the acquisition, reassignment, utilization, or disposition of an aircraft.
  - (2) With the support of the Headquarters AMD, periodically review aircraft requirements, costs, and the overall effectiveness of aircraft operations that support their requirements.
- d. The Assistant Administrator for the Office of International and Interagency Relations (OIIR) shall provide the interface between NASA and elements of the Department of Defense (DoD), provide policy guidance and coordination for NASA international activities, and request aircraft flight clearances from foreign governments through the Department of State.
- e. The Director, AMD:
  - (1) Is responsible for functional leadership, staff support to the Administrator, and central services as they relate to aircraft management and is the Agency's Aircraft Capability Leader and Senior Aviation Management Official (SAMO) as required by FMR 102-33.30.
  - (2) Has the authority to approve aircraft acquisition, disposition, transfers, and assign aircraft to the appropriate Centers. Assignment of aircraft to Centers is a joint responsibility between the Aircraft Management Division and The Mission Directorate(s) requiring and funding the aircraft program(s).
  - (3) Is the Agency focal point for aviation operations, aircraft management issues, and implementation of aviation safety policy developed by the Office of Safety and Mission Assurance. On such matters, the AMD is the Agency's liaison to the FAA, DoD, GSA, the Interagency Committee for Aviation Policy, other Government agencies, and industry.
  - (4) Is responsible for developing policies governing the management of NASA aircraft, including aircraft operations, aircraft maintenance, aviation training, airworthiness, flight readiness reviews, cost effectiveness, and implementation of Federal regulations and policies.
  - (5) Shall lead Agency aircraft team in development of roadmap of strategic goals to requirements and coordinate the Headquarters review and evaluation of proposed acquisitions, classifications, assignments, and dispositions of NASA aircraft.
  - (6) Shall coordinate reviews of all NASA flight operations to ensure compliance with NASA aircraft management policies.
- f. The NASA Inter-Center Aircraft Operating Panel (IAOP) is responsible for providing assistance, counsel, and recommendations to the Assistant Administrator, OSI, other NASA Senior Management Officials, and the AMD concerning Agency policies and any other matters related to NASA aircraft operations. The NASA IAOP shall support IAOP reviews of Center aircraft operations.
- g. Center Directors are responsible for ensuring the safe, efficient, and effective operation of all aircraft assigned to their Centers. Center Directors are responsible for implementing actions and instructions necessary to comply with NASA policy on aircraft management and aviation safety; for ensuring that flight objectives and flight resources meet program requirements; and for reporting aircraft costs and performance metrics in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget guidelines and NASA procedural requirements.
  - (1) For Centers that have flight operations, Center Directors shall establish a program-independent flight operations office that will carry out the functions of a Chief of Flight Operations, an Aviation Safety Officer, a Chief of Maintenance, a Chief of Engineering (when aircraft modifications are routine), and a Chief of Quality Assurance.
    - (a) The functions of the Chief of Flight Operations, Aviation Safety Officer, Chief of Maintenance, and Chief of Quality Assurance are inherently governmental and shall be performed by civil service personnel.
    - (b) The functions of the Chief of Flight Operations and Aviation Safety Officer shall not be performed by the same individual in a dual role.
  - (2) Center Directors have the authority to approve aircraft charters or short-term (30-day) aircraft leases and to approve acquisition of aircraft to be used solely for spare parts, wind tunnel models, or as static displays. Such acquisitions shall be reported in advance to the AMD in writing.
  - (3) Center Directors shall provide support to the IAOP Aircraft Operations Review Program.
  - (4) Center Directors with responsibility over NASA airfields and helipads shall ensure that those airfields are managed, maintained, and utilized in a safe, effective, and cost-efficient manner in accordance with NPR 7900.3, Aircraft Operations Management Manual.

- (5) If a Center has no flight operations office, support from another NASA flight operations office shall be coordinated by the AMD and the IAOP.
- (6) Policies and procedures for acquisition, review, approval, and implementation of all flight programs shall be established by NASA Centers and facilities that operate aircraft or acquire external aircraft services (both Government and commercial), including NASA Headquarters, to comply with NASA aircraft management policies as established in this NPD and in NPR 7900.3.
- (7) All aviation operations acquired, conducted, or sponsored, including astronaut training, program support, security, research, or scientific projects that use aviation assets, are to be evaluated and approved by the NASA airworthiness and aircraft management organizations at the Center that is responsible for those projects.
- (a) Prior to contract award for aviation services, the flight operations office at the NASA Center that manages the contract shall ensure that an approved Headquarters AMD aircraft operations and aviation safety risk analysis review of the final candidates has been completed.
- (b) An Airworthiness Safety and Fight Readiness review shall include a review of the terms of the contract, the risks to NASA, the hazards associated with the proposed flight operation, the airworthiness of the aircraft, and the capabilities of the contractor. The results of these reviews are incorporated in the contractor selection process.
- (c) At least one NASA flight operations officer shall be a member of the selection board or team.
- (d) If the Center has no flight operations office, support from another NASA flight operations office shall be coordinated by Headquarters AMD and the NASA IAOP.
- (8) All Centers conducting aircraft operations (and certain commercial aviation services) shall conduct an aviation safety review on a biennial basis utilizing the IAOP Review Program. The IAOP Review Program provides a peer review and objective management evaluation of the procedures and practices that are being used at each Center operating aircraft to ensure that safe and efficient aircraft operations are accomplished.
- h. The Center contracting office shall obtain concurrence from the Center Chief of the Flight Operations office on all aircraft contracts and Space Act Agreements during the planning stage, to ensure that the contemplated award complies with the NASA aviation safety program requirements, as outlined in 48 CFR, subpt. 1847.2, and particularly NPR 7900.3. If the contract is expected to provide long-term, continuous support (greater than one year), the aviation program shall be subject to the IAOP review process in the same manner as NASA Centers.
- i. The Chief of Flight Operations of a program-independent flight office plans, organizes, directs, and controls the operations, maintenance, modification, safety, and support of all Center-assigned or contracted aircraft in accordance with NPR 7900.
- (1) He or she shall be the senior line manager responsible for aviation activities at the Center and be assigned the resources and authority necessary to manage and conduct safe, effective, and efficient operations in accordance with NASA directives, guidance, and other applicable Federal regulations.
- (2) Any Center contract or agreement, including Space Act Agreements, that includes aviation operations shall be coordinated, reviewed, and concurred with by the Chief of Flight Operations prior to contract award or execution of the agreement.
- j. Managers at all levels are responsible for supporting the safe conduct of aircraft operations that involve their programs or personnel. Managers who write aviation contracts shall coordinate those contracts with the Center's flight operations office to ensure compliance with the NASA aviation safety program and aircraft management policies.
- k. The designated pilot-in-command is ultimately responsible for the conduct and safety of the flight and is the final authority concerning the safe operation of the aircraft and all safety aspects of the flight.

## 6. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

None.

## 7. MEASUREMENT/VERIFICATION

- a. An annual report provided by the Director, AMD, to the Assistant Administrator, OSI, that includes an Agency-wide aircraft inventory, a summary on the utilization of each aircraft in relation to the programs it supports, a consolidated summary of the performance measurements used and provided by each Center, aviation safety statistics, and an analysis of future aircraft requirements.
- b. The IAOP Operations Review Program used to measure each Center's flight operations activities in accordance with NPR 7900.3.

## 8. CANCELLATION

NPD 7900.4C, NASA Aircraft Operations Management, dated April 8, 2009.

**/s/ Charlie f. Bolden, Jr.  
Acting Administrator**

## ATTACHMENT A: (TEXT)

### ACRONYMS

AA Associate Administrators  
 AMD Aircraft Management Division  
 CAS Commercial Aviation Services  
 DoD Department of Defense  
 FAA Federal Aviation Administration  
 FMR Federal Management Regulation  
 GSA General Services Administration  
 IAOP Inter-Center Aircraft Operations Panel  
 NAMIS NASA Aircraft Management Information System  
 NPD NASA Policy Directive  
 OIIR Office of International and Interagency Relations  
 OSI Office of Strategic Infrastructure  
 SAMO Senior Aviation Management Official  
 TDY Temporary Duty  
 UAS Unmanned Aerial Systems

### (URL for Graphic)

None.

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