	VATSIM Network United States Division	SOP/Policy/Procedure #	DP003
		Revision #	5
	General Events Policy	Implementation Date	06/04/2021
Page #	1 of 9	**Last Reviewed/Update Date**	11/07/2022
Submitted by:	VATUSA5: Shane O'Neill	**Approval**	/Anthony Santanastaso/

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1. **Document Status**

    1.1. This policy revision supersedes any previous revision of this document.
    1.2. This policy cancels VATUSA 7210.35C.
    1.3. The following changes were incorporated in this revision:
        1.3.1. Changed FNO policies (5.1)
        1.3.2. Added an exception to the "double booking" rule (5.2.3.3)
        1.3.3. Changed formatting for 5.7
        1.3.4. Added Command Center policy (5.8), consolidated from the now cancelled 7210.35C

2. **Purpose**

    2.1. To establish division-wide clarification and standardization on the process for preparing for, hosting, and reviewing events within VATUSA.

3. **Applicability**

    3.1. This policy applies to the VATUSA division and all subdivisions within.

4. **Definitions**

    4.1. Friday Night Operations (FNO): A key recurring VATSIM event, hosted by VATUSA but usually planned and coordinated by ARTCCs, that attracts a significant number of pilots and controllers.
    4.2. Live Event: Any Division or ARTCC event that has an in-person attendance of at least 4 controllers.
    4.3. VATUSA5: VATUSA Events Manager
    4.4. ACE Team: A group of highly skilled controllers that volunteer to assist facilities with event staffing.

5. **Policies & Procedures**

    5.1. Friday Night Operations (FNO)
        5.1.1. FNO Events are formally bid on twice a year during two bidding cycles. The VATUSA Events Manager will open bidding via a forum post on the VATUSA Forums. Only applicable staff members (EC, DATM, or ATM) are eligible to submit bids.
        5.1.2. All ARTCCs are guaranteed an FNO slot for each cycle. ARTCCs may opt to withhold a bid for a cycle without consequence.
        5.1.3. Annually recurring events with a significant history will have first priority on bidding. To qualify, an event must have been held the previous three out of four years.
            5.1.3.1.   Priority does not apply to ARTCCs requesting a single-field FNO
        5.1.4. For each cycle, there will be eight slots available for single-field FNOs. If more than eight ARTCCs bid for a single-field FNO, the VATUSA Events Manager will determine the facilities best suited for the slots.
            5.1.4.1.   Single-ARTCC FNOs must feature additional airfields to not be considered a single-field FNO. An FNO may involve only one ARTCC, the host, and not be considered single field if

they feature an additional two class bravo's or three class charlie's. Different combinations can be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

5.1.5. VATUSA does not guarantee that facilities will receive a date that they requested for their FNO. The FNO calendar will be created to ensure minimal controller fatigue.

5.1.5.1. There will be a minimum of two weeks without an FNO for each bidding cycle. These are referred to as BYE weeks. This is to ensure there are designated periods to replenish controller fatigue.

5.1.6. Any airport chosen to host a FNO must be physically able to accommodate FNO level traffic. Airfields supporting a major airport in an FNO should have at least 10 gates and multiple long runways. VATUSA reserves the right to require an airport to change if a host airport is deemed unable to support FNO level traffic.

5.1.7. If an ARTCC is unable to support its scheduled FNO it must provide coverage for the date. This may be accomplished by "borrowing" controllers for the event, requesting assistance from the ACE Team, agreeing with another ARTCC to take over the date, switching dates with another ARTCC, etc. If the ARTCC is still unable to support or have another ARTCC take over the scheduled FNO, the ARTCC must provide notice to the VATUSA Events Manager at least 21 days prior to the event to allow VATUSA ample time to transfer control of the event and advertise the new locations.

5.1.7.1. If the ARTCC does not notify VATUSA at least 21 days prior to their FNO, the ARTCC will not receive a bidding opportunity for the next bidding cycle.

5.2. ARTCC Sponsored Events

5.2.1. Saturday evening events cannot be booked or published on the VATUSA Events Calendar more than 6 months in advance.

5.2.2. Recurring Events such as regional nights may be submitted for a maximum of 4 weeks in a row initially. This may be extended in 2-week intervals provided no ARTCC has booked that date or time slot within a week of the fourth occurrence. For example, an event repeats itself every Thursday at 7:00pm. This event may only be submitted 4 times initially. After the third Thursday (which is also one week before the conclusion of the 4th recurring event), if no ARTCC has booked an event for the 5th or 6th Thursday at 7:00pm, then the submitter may book the 5th and 6th Thursday at that time.

5.2.3. VATUSA will only approve one event per date and time. If an event is submitted that conflicts with an event that has already been posted, then that event will be denied and the submitting ARTCC shall discontinue all event preparations for that date and time. This is done in fairness to the ARTCC hosting the original event to maximize the amount of traffic they might see during their event.

5.2.3.1. ARTCCs wishing to host an event during an overlapping time are encouraged to work together to deconflict the dates and/or times, if possible.

5.2.3.2. Upon joint request of both ARTCCs requesting an overlapping event to the VATUSA Events Manager, overlap may be permitted.

5.2.3.3. Events with a duration greater than twenty-four (24) hours are excluded from this policy, except for the first four and the last four hours of the event.

5.2.4. Use of the word "Live" in event titles, descriptions, banners, or any other event-related information is restricted to those events meeting the definition of "live event."

5.3. Interdivisional Events

5.3.1. ARTCC Events Coordinators must include the VATUSA Events Manager in all interdivisional event coordination and communication (e.g. joint events with VATCAN, VATMEX, VATCAR, etc.). This is due to higher exposure and expectations associated with multiple divisions advertising the event to pilots and a history of high-visibility failures in the past. For example, if ZMP and VATCAN plan a crossfire event featuring KMSP and CYWG, the VATUSA Events Manager must be included in all planning/coordination. VATUSA reserves the right to deny the event or request changes be made at any time.

5.3.1.1. This does not apply to ARTCCs who share a common border with another division and request neighbor support for their own event. Instead, coordination requests should be made through the Command Center. For example, if ZSE requests CYVR support for an FNO at KSEA, the VATUSA Events Manager does not need to be involved, but Command Center does.

5.4. Event Submissions

5.4.1. Event submissions must contain in the description section of the posting prior to posting on the forums, at a minimum:

5.4.1.1. Date and time of event, including both start and end times (zulu time is required, local time can be included additionally)

5.4.1.2. Featured airports (ICAO or IATA Codes)

5.4.1.3. Title and Theme

5.4.1.4. General description of event

5.4.2. All events must have a banner. The banner should be easily readable and in a 16:9 format (1920x1080, 2048x1152, etc.). The banner must be added to the beginning of the description section no later than 2 weeks prior to the event date. If the event is being submitted within 2 weeks of the event date, the initial event submission must include a 16:9 formatted banner.

5.4.3. Events that are posted to the VATUSA events calendar MUST also be posted to the myVATSIM Portal at the time the banner for the event is added to the VATUSA calendar posting.

5.4.4. Event submissions not meeting the above requests will be denied and removed. This is to prevent ARTCCs from reserving a date with no plan on how to fulfill the event, thus essentially blocking other ARTCCs from planning an event on that date/time.

5.4.5. Events may not use nor refer to any real-world event, aviation related or not, that involves a tragedy where there has been injury or loss of life as a part of the theming or reason for having the event. This includes but is not limited to 9/11 memorial fly-ins, air disaster memorial flights, or honor flights for victims of a tragedy.

5.4.6. Events that do not meet the above criteria will be removed by VATUSA. VATUSA may extend a 24-hour courtesy to the ARTCC to fix the event post. If another ARTCC staff member notices the non-compliant event post and wants to take the date and time, that slot will then be awarded to that ARTCC (assuming the ARTCC already has all the required information to post to the VATUSA calendar) pending a possible 24-hour courtesy.

5.4.7. The VATUSA Events Manager is responsible for posting Cross the Pond, WorldFlight, Light Up America, Open Mic Nights, and any other division-wide large-scale events on the VATUSA calendar.

5.5. General Events Coordinator Responsibilities

5.5.1. Events Coordinators shall check the VATUSA Events Calendar periodically to see if surrounding ARTCCs might need support staffing for upcoming neighboring events in the next 4 weeks. If no official email was received requesting support staffing, the EC should reach out to the neighboring ARTCC for clarification on whether they are requesting support staffing or not. Tier 1 staffing should automatically be presumed as requested until otherwise agreed upon.

5.5.2. Events Coordinators should contact applicable neighboring ARTCCs to request support staffing for an event within 3-5 weeks of event date.

5.5.3. Events Coordinators shall check the VATUSA Discord and the vATCSCC Discord often to keep up with any discussions and/or announcements pertaining to events and relevant discussions.

5.6. Ramp Controllers for VATUSA Hosted Events

5.6.1. VATUSA ARTCCs may use ramp controllers not already defined in a facility SOP for events that expect a high volume of traffic to ensure the event flows smoothly and departures are spaced correctly.

5.6.2. Neighboring ARTCCs to a VATUSA ARTCC currently hosting an event may implement ramp controllers not already defined in a facility SOP. This is to ensure proper spacing for the departing ARTCC and to alleviate some stress off the delivery and ground controllers.

5.6.3. Ramp controllers may control when an aircraft conducts a pushback. The pilot must be informed via PDC (Pre-Departure Clearance) or voice clearance to contact ramp on control on said frequency when ready for push back.

5.7. ACE Team

5.7.1. Members wishing to join the ACE Team must meet the below qualifications
   A. Be an active C1 or higher in their current home ARTCC
   B. Received the C1 promotion at least 6 months prior to request
   C. Have a minimum of 300 hours since C1 promotion
   D. Possess a positive and professional attitude with a willingness to help others
   E. Have a letter of recommendation from the TA or ATM of the member's home ARTCC
   F. Pass the VATUSA ACE Team examination on the VATUSA website
   G. Pass the VATUSA ACE Team practical examination

5.7.1.1. Individuals wishing to apply for the ACE Team should email the VATUSA Events Manager at vatusa5@vatusa.net. The email should include the applicants CID, home ARTCC, email, and a short paragraph detailing why they want to join ACE Team. Letters of recommendation should be submitted from the recommender directly to VATUSA5.

5.7.2. ARTCCs' wishing to request the ACE Team for an event should do one of the following:
   A. Email the VATUSA Events Manager at vatusa5@vatusa.net at least 72 hours prior to the event.

B. Post a message in the VATUSA Discord #aceteam-requests channel, at least 48 hours prior to the event. Please include the date and time of the event, a link to the event, and the number of ACE Team members requested.

5.7.2.1. Only ARTCC staff are authorized to request ACE Team.

5.7.2.2. ARTCC staff may only request ACE Team for their facility. Staffing requests for other facilities must be submitted to the Command Center.

5.7.2.3. Within one week of the conclusion of the event, a staff member from the requesting ARTCC must fill out the ACE Member Participation Form on https://vats.im/acereport

5.7.3. ACE Team members will be required to participate in either an ACE Team activity or assist with an event semiannually.

5.7.4. The VATUSA Events Manager shall conduct a roster cleanout in the first week of July and January, following the conclusion of each semiannual period. The VATUSA Events Manager reserves the right to remove any ACE Team member at any time with or without reason.

5.7.5. ACE Team members should regularly check and participate in the VATUSA Discord to keep up with announcements and conversations pertaining to the ACE Team.

5.7.6. ACE Team members shall always maintain an acceptable level of professionalism. If a member's behavior is deemed inappropriate, the member may be removed from the ACE Team by VATUSA Staff.

5.7.7. The VATUSA Events Manager shall collect and organize ACE Team availability prior to the event that ACE Team is being requested for. This information will be passed along to Command Center prior to the event start time.

5.7.8. The Command Center shall have operational control over the ACE Team during events in which ACE is requested.

5.7.9. ACE controllers will be notified of requests upon facility submission. Facilities may use ACE members for any purpose that is agreed upon.

5.7.10. ACE Team members are only granted temporary certifications for their assigned controlling position for the event duration. Controlling outside the event period without other certification is prohibited.

5.8. Command Center

5.8.1. This section provides instructions, standards, and guidance for the operation of the Command Center. The Command Center is responsible for monitoring and managing the flow of air traffic throughout the National Airspace System (NAS), to produce a safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of traffic while minimizing delays. Traffic Manage Units (TMU) are responsible for monitoring and balancing traffic flows within their respective areas of responsibility in accordance with traffic management directives.

5.8.2. The Command Center is responsible for the following:

A. Implementing national traffic management programs

B. Monitoring and analyzing system components and weather patterns for potential system impact

C. Determining when the implementation of a traffic management initiative (TMI) is required

D. Acting as the authority for interfacility traffic management initiatives

E. Creating future plans for traffic management that affect multiple facilities

F. Communicating all of the above with facilities

G. Resolving operational disagreements between facilities

5.8.3. The National Traffic Management Team (NTMT) is responsible for the operations of the Command Center. The VATUSA Events Manager acts as the chair of the NTMT. Members of the NTMT are appointed by VATUSA. In addition to the requirements listed in 5.8.2., NTMT members are responsible for the following:

A. Creating and managing TMU training programs that benefit facility staff

B. Organizing telecons and PERTI plans as necessary

C. Encouraging and supervising operational communication between facilities

D. Acting as a TMU on the VATSIM Network in VATUSA.

E. Managing all other day-to-day operations of the Command Center.

5.8.4. The NTMT can and will routinely delegate Command Center responsibilities to National Traffic Management Specialists (NTMS). NTMS applicants may apply by emailing the VATUSA Events Manager stating their interest in joining the team and a brief explanation of why they would like to join the team.

5.8.4.1. Members of the Command Center acting as TMU personnel on the network should connect with a callsign of DCC_XX_TMU, with the XX being their Command Center initials.

5.8.5. Members of the Command Center, NTMT Members and NTMS', must maintain an active presence. At the discretion of the VATUSA Events Manager, members that do not contribute to the Command Center over a period of two months can be removed. Exceptions apply.

5.8.6. Facilities are required to coordinate and communicate information that may have an impact on the NAS, whether that be with other facilities or the Command Center. When involving more than one additional facility in a conversation, it is highly recommended that all communications take place in the vATCSCC Discord in the appropriate channels. These communications are not required to be in the Discord until final decisions are made, however traffic management coordination, including proposed initiatives and significant operational constraints, must be coordinated in the vATCSCC Discord.

5.8.7. Traffic Management Initiatives (TMIs) are techniques used to balance demand with capacity in the NAS. There are various TMIs that can be utilized, including the following.

A. Altitude

B. Miles-in-trail (MIT) – the number of miles required between aircraft that match certain criteria, which can be separation, airport, fix, altitude, sector, or route specific. MIT is used to apportion traffic into manageable flows.

C. Minutes-in-trail (MINIT) – the number of minutes required between successive aircraft.

D. Fix balancing – assigning an aircraft a fix that is not in their flight plan during the arrival or departure phase of flight to distribute demand.

E. Sequencing programs – these include the departure sequencing programs, where aircraft will be assigned a departure time, the en route sequencing program, the arrival sequencing program, where aircraft will be assigned times to cross a fix, and time-based metering, where ATC is assigned a time to have an aircraft cross a certain fix.

F. Reroutes – these can be issued if the aircraft's current flight plan is not with the flow of traffic, to avoid congested airspace, or to avoid areas of known weather.

G. Ground Delay Programs (GDP)

H. Ground Stops (GS)

5.8.7.1. TMIs create delays and can be bothersome for both pilots and controllers. TMU personnel must employ the least restrictive methods available to minimize delays.

5.8.7.2. TMIs should be monitored and evaluated continuously, and adjustments, including cancellation, should be made as necessary.

5.8.7.3. All traffic management initiatives must be documented in the National Traffic Management Log (NTML). The NTML is a running timestamped record of all TMIs and events that have taken place. Only TMUs, facility staff, events staff, and Command Center staff should post in the NTML.

5.8.7.4. NTML entries must include:
- A. An entry time and a valid time in UTC
- B. The requesting and providing facilities
- C. A description of the TMI request

5.8.7.5. ECs, TMUs, and facility staff that need help with publishing NTML entries can consult a member of the Command Center for assistance. A breadth of documentation is available in the vATCSCC Discord, and a TMI Cheat Sheet is available here.

5.8.7.6. Facilities should always work as a team. If a facility does not comply with a TMI that is deemed necessary by both the requesting facility and the Command Center, the requesting facility should contact the VATUSA Events Manager.

5.8.7.7. Facilities may post to the NTML without Command Center approval. If the Command Center deems a TMI extremely unnecessary, the facility will be asked to meet with the NTMT to discuss proper TMI usage.

5.8.8. The Command Center is responsible for identifying VATUSA sponsored events where Command Center activity will be required. If an event is not identified, facilities may request Command Center activation. In order for the Command Center to properly allocate resources, four TMU Operating Levels exist, determined by the expected impact they will have on the NAS.

5.8.8.1. OpLevel 1 – Steady State: This OpLevel is characterized by no significant impacts or events to the NAS that will require TMU coordination. Facilities are not required to report data, but may do so if they wish, unless specifically requested by the Command Center.

5.8.8.2. OpLevel 2 – Localized Impact: This OpLevel is characterized by an event that features two or fewer facilities with minimal to no impact to other neighboring facilities. Facilities should utilize data reporting. The Command Center will provide staffing on the regional level.

5.8.8.3. OpLevel 3 – Regional Impact: This OpLevel is characterized by an event that heavily impacts the host facilities and their neighbors, such as FNOs or weekend primetime events. Facilities should utilize data reporting and provide a dedicated TMU.

5.8.8.4. OpLevel 4 – NAS-Wide Impact: This OpLevel is characterized by an event that involves a significant number of facilities, has a significant impact on the NAS, or is of extended duration, such as Cross the Pond or WorldFlight. All impacted facilities should provide a dedicated TMU. To the maximum extent possible, all affected facilities and the Command Center will provide the highest level of staffing.

5.8.9. Upon being activated for an event, the Command Center, in addition to the responsibilities outlined in 5.8.2. and 5.8.3., can act as an assistant and general resource for facilities. Facilities should work routinely with the Command Center during events.

5.8.10. Hotlines may be activated during an event that the Command Center is active for. Hotlines are voice channels used for communication between facility TMU and Command Center personnel. The VATUSA TeamSpeak should be utilized during periods when a hotline is active.

5.8.11. The PERTI process (Plan, Execute, Review, Train, Improve) is a collaborative decision-making process within the Command Center.

5.8.11.1. Plan: The Command Center will utilize all available data to construct, implement, and adjust plans for an event. All participating facilities will be included in the planning process and informed of the operational goals. The plan will be constructed and coordinated with ample time for reevaluation to take place. The plan should be finalized twenty-four hours prior the start of the event.

5.8.11.2. Execute: The operational goals established in the plan must be periodically reevaluated and tactical, real-time adjustments should be made. The Command Center is responsible for managing the plan and involving participating facilities. Facilities should always communicate their concerns and provide recommendations to amend the plan when necessary.

5.8.11.3. Review: The Command Center will self-assess its process after the completion of an event. The review process includes assessing the operational goals, analyzing data, measuring the extent to which anticipated goals and constraints were verified, and consolidating the data into an understandable and actionable format. A Traffic Management Review (TMR) will be publicly provided by the Command Center for most events that require Command Center activation. TMRs may also be requested by facility staff for other events. TMRs consist of a general overview of the event, the operational plan, a review of the TMIs used and their effects, and a summary of identified achievements and vulnerabilities.

5.8.11.4. Train and Improve: The Command Center will use all available information to provide recommendations on the further advancement of controller ability within VATUSA. Traffic Management training will utilize data taken from previous events in order to continually evolve and improve.