Spokane International Airport
First Airport to Activate Direct-Entry Digital NOTAM System using
Airport Self-Certification

A significant milestone was reached last week by the Aeronautical Information Management (AIM) Directorate, when Spokane International Airport (GEG) in Washington State became the first airport to be activated onto the Direct-entry Digital NOTAM System, using the new Airport Self-Certification (ASC) web application.

AIM, under the direction of Joshua Gustin and the Mission Support Group (AJV-2), has orchestrated the development of this program along with the Direct-entry Digital NOTAM System. The use of digital NOTAMs is another milestone in implementing the NextGen vision. The ASC process adds efficiency in the effort to enable AIM customers to activate more airports in the use of NOTAM Manager, by utilizing Self-Certification.

The Self-Certification program is an extension of the Federal NOTAM System (FNS) NOTAM Manager (NM) direct entry tool. This FNS NOTAM Manager is currently being deployed, and is already in place at 118 airports in the National Airspace System (NAS), among the lower 48 states, Alaska, and Hawaii. The Self-Certification web application enables airport managers and executives to deploy the tool at a self-paced rate, thus reducing the logistical footprint formerly required. Currently a team of 2-3 persons (comprised of Federal and Contract employees) spends an average of 3 days at an airport conducting training and certification to accomplish the same thing that the Self-Certification program does.

Before employees at an airport can use NOTAM Manager to originate digital NOTAMs, the physical descriptions of an airport’s features must first be uploaded into the NOTAM Manager database. The current legacy process for gathering this information is being done by Lockheed Martin through the National Airspace Integration Support Contract (NISC). This process requires time from the contractor to work with each airport to provide briefings, develop a Letter of Agreement and a Memorandum of Agreement as well as to provide training to each airport.

The new ASC application enables an authorized representative at the airport to view and verify information about features at their airport. If necessary, the representative can add or change information about their airport taxiways and aprons. Once the airport data is complete and accurate, then the airport representative can use the Airport Self-Certification application to authorize airport personnel to take the on-line training on the use of the NOTAM Manager System.

The Self-Certification program eliminates the need for several people to spend multiple days at an airport training, while still maintaining a high degree of safety and oversight from the
Program Management Offices, located at FAA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., and at the Central Regional office (ACE) located in Kansas City, MO. Anticipated deployment costs will be reduced by roughly 50-75%, enabling the Program Management Offices to conduct virtual training from their home offices and update critical airfield data via automation tools.

The first airport to complete the ASC process is Spokane International Airport (GEG). Spokane International Airport activated the Digital NOTAM Manager System last week, on March 25, 2013. One of the features of the Airport Self-Certification application is for an airport that is responsible for issuing NOTAMs for another airport, to certify that secondary airport through the ASC process as well. Spokane is responsible for issuing NOTAMs at Felts Field Airport located in the Spokane area.

Comments from Spokane about the ASC process were very positive. Ryan Sheehan, Director of Operations & Maintenance at Spokane International Airport & Felts Field stated, “The Operations Staff at Spokane International Airport found the Self-Certification System to be relatively straightforward and easy to use. The support we received from the Contract Support team at Lockheed Martin (NISC) was excellent. Each part of the process, from registration of users, to setting up the airport facility data, to the training and information provided was well constructed and easy to follow.”

For activation of NOTAM Manager through the Airport Self-Certification application, at least one person from each facility is required to participate in virtual training prior to activation. Once that is completed the airport is able to activate NOTAM Manager at their airport and begin issuing their own NOTAMs into the United States NOTAM System, bypassing Flight Services.

While AIM will continue to certify some airports through the legacy process, the use of the new Airport Self-Certification application will greatly accelerate the number of airports that can be activated on the Direct-entry Digital NOTAM Manager System.

Glenn Sigley, AIM manager of the Self-Certification program said, “The great thing about Self-Certification is the cost savings we achieve, while still ensuring safety standards are strictly adhered to. This program truly embodies the spirit and intent of NextGen and serves to make the National Airspace System safer and more efficient in the 21st Century.”