

FIJI AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION CIRCULAR



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OPS

PLANNING AND CONDUCT OF VFR FLIGHTS

1 OBJECTIVE

- 1.1 The objective of this AIC is to advise the industry of the concern held by the Civil Aviation Authority of the Fiji Islands on the conduct of VFR flights.

2 POLICY

- 2.1 Except as specified in 2.2 below, Fiji does not make provision for VFR flights to operate other than by day, which is between 15 minutes before sunrise (First Light) to 15 minutes after sunset (Last Light).
- 2.2 The current exception is under the provision in ANR 113 to operate as Special VFR flight at night in a control zone in accordance with the requirements of ANR 112.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 “Authority” means the Civil Aviation Authority of the Fiji Islands.
“Control zone” means the controlled airspace extending upwards from the surface of the earth to a specified upper limit;

4. PROPOSED LEGISLATION CHANGE

- 4.1 The Authority has carried out a review of the existing requirement and found that the provision allows a level of risk that is unacceptable for air transport operations. The risks identified included controlled flight into terrain, the likelihood of not being able to carry out a safe forced landing as is required by Annex 6 paragraph 5.1.2 and the higher risk of disorientation that occurs at night or in instrument meteorological conditions.

The legislation change will remove the exemption conditions that currently exist in ANR 113 (b) and prohibit flight under VFR at night except for training flights in a control zone.

5. RECENT OCCURRENCES

- 5.1 There have been a number of recent occurrences that support and justify the change. On one recent occasion the pilot gave the excuse that he had encountered exceptionally strong headwinds that caused him to arrive later than expected. This was notwithstanding that the headwinds of 30 knots were in the available area forecast and he had flown other sectors in the same winds. A review of the flight plan would have shown that the headwinds would extend the standard sector time by some 20 minutes. He failed to do this and it is dubious as to whether he actually reached the control zone before last light to be able to make use of the existing exemption provision.

Another occasion saw a pilot depart his base for a 3 sector flight that had flight times totalling 33 minutes and two intermediate stops and the departure was only 42 minutes before last light. The flight log revealed that he was only on the ground at one stop for 2 minutes – hardly sufficient time to land, taxi in, shut down one engine, board a passenger, start up and complete the taxi and takeoff checks. As it happened, he landed 4 minutes after last light, notwithstanding that his Operations Manual states '*All night flights shall be conducted under IFR*', effectively excluding the use of the ANR 113 exemption provision.

6 CONDITIONS OF OPERATIONS

- 6.1 Landing a VFR flight after last light is an indication of poor flight management and risk assessment. It also indicates a culture of risk taking that is unacceptable in today's aviation environment.
- 6.2 Operators are to plan and carry out their operations so that VFR aircraft (other than training flights) do not operate at night. It is strongly recommended that operations should be planned and conducted so as to be on the ground by sunset, thus giving a small margin for traffic or other delays.

7. TRAINING FLIGHTS AT NIGHT

- 7.1 The amendment will also make provision for training flights to be conducted at night in a Control Zone as SVFR flight.

8 ENFORCEMENT ACTION

- 8.1 Pilots and operators should take note that the legislation amendments that will prohibit VFR at night (except for the training situation) also contain the provision to impose fines on both the pilot and the operator should the requirement not be observed.

The Authority has an obligation and intends to ensure that the safety of the public is not compromised.