

AFCEC team promotes flight safety across the Air Force

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JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas – A new tool standardizes and streamlines the airfield waiver process.

Thanks to the efforts of the Planning and Integration Directorate's Airfield Planning and Waiver (AP&W) Team, the Air Force now has a comprehensive process to address airfield development, process waivers and focus on investment strategies to identify projects that will ultimately reduce the number of high and medium risk temporary airfield waivers.

The tool, known as the Airfield Waiver Support Tool (AWST), provides an efficient way for Airfield Managers and base level Community Planners to develop, submit, and track airfield waivers.

Airfield waivers are required when compliance with airfield criteria, or standards, cannot be achieved. Approval of a waiver is an acknowledgment of the associated risk. The waiver process is designed to ensure leadership is aware of potential risk and to ensure that all alternatives have been considered.

There are two types of waivers that the Air Force employs: permanent waivers and temporary waivers. Permanent waivers are for criteria violations that cannot be reasonably met. Temporary waivers are for criteria violations that can be corrected within a reasonable amount of time (normally eight years). Waivers are approved/disapproved by the owning MAJCOM Deputy Commander and constitute acceptance of the risk associated with criteria violations.

A secondary benefit of the AWST is that it creates a repository of all airfield waivers across the Air Force.

"The Waiver Support Tool allows us to be proactive and adds transparency to the number and scope of waivers across the Air Force," said Alex Colby, the AFCEC Regional Planning subject matter expert, "which in turn helps development of strategies to fund projects, where needed, that eliminate unnecessary obstructions."

Using data consolidated by the tool, the team has identified \$56 million in projects, across 15 installations that, once funded and completed, will promote safety in the airfield environment at Air Force installations.

"The Airfield Waiver Support Tool was born out of the AFCEC Airfield Waiver Team's focus on continual process improvement and their commitment to support Planners and Airfield Managers in the field. The AP&W Team continually strives to provide excellent customer service through reach-back support, and are always looking for ways to improve internal and external processes," said Kathy Domm, AFCEC Regional Planning Branch Chief.

Before the AWST was in place, each MAJCOM used their own process for waiver submittal and approval. Last year, the AP&W Team collaborated with Headquarters Air Force to develop the first ever standardized waiver request form, now known as Air Force Form 505, Airfield Waiver Request. The form is an integral part of the AWST an associated effort to standardize the program across the Air Force enterprise.

"The Airfield Waiver Support Tool incorporates risk assessment data, supporting visual graphics, references and coordination information," said John Gibson, the Airfield Waiver program specialist and lead for the effort. "Housed on CE-DASH, the tool can also be used to securely transmit waiver packages from installations to AFCEC for review, and on to MAJCOMs for approval which makes it much easier on Planners in the field."

The tool has surpassed AFCEC's expectations for creating efficiencies and simplifying the process.

For 2021, the AP&W Team remains focused on protecting Air Force personnel and assets in the airfield environment by providing reach-back support in the development of airfield waivers, ensuring technical sufficiency and advocating for resources to reduce airfield obstructions.