

**Subject:** Message from the Under Secretary - Safety Stand-Down Regarding Use of non-NOAA Aircraft  
**From:** "VADM Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr., USN (Ret.)" <Announcement@noaa.gov>  
**Date:** Fri, 19 Nov 2004 18:43:49 -0500

MEMORANDUM FOR: ALL NOAA EMPLOYEES

FROM: Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.  
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
Under Secretary of Commerce for  
Oceans and Atmosphere

SUBJECT: Safety Stand-Down Regarding Use of  
non-NOAA Aircraft

It has come to my attention that some NOAA employees are flying non-NOAA aircraft for official NOAA business (including mission-related or travel-related purposes). For example, the NOAA Weather Service has a "designated pilot program," under which NOAA employees who are licensed pilots fly their own or rented aircraft to conduct official NOAA business, such as storm damage surveys. Similarly, other NOAA employees occasionally rent or lease aircraft for official NOAA business with NOAA employees or hired pilots flying those aircraft.

Department Organization Order 25-5 vests responsibility for oversight of all aircraft operations in NOAA with NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations (NMAO). NMAO has well-established programs in place to ensure safe operation of aircraft that NOAA owns (NOAA aircraft). At present, however, NMAO has only recommended interim program guidance to ensure safe operation of aircraft NOAA does not own (non-NOAA aircraft) that are being used for official NOAA business.

Safety is NOAA's number one priority as reflected in NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 209-1 (NOAA Safety Policy). In order to ensure the safety of our NOAA family, NOAA is commencing a safety stand-down effective immediately of any activity in which a non-NOAA aircraft is being used for official NOAA business. Among other things, this stand-down prohibits NOAA personnel or NOAA contract employees from using a Government Transportation Request, SF-44, government travel card, government purchase card, or any other means to procure use of non-NOAA aircraft for official NOAA business.

This stand-down does not apply to:

1. point-to-point travel using a Travel Management Service (as defined in 41 C.F.R. 300-3.1 (2004));
2. contracts for products that were acquired through the use of aircraft provided no NOAA personnel, NOAA contract employees, or any individual who meets the definition of an employee under Public Law 103-3 (Federal Employees Compensation Act) fly on the aircraft in any capacity;
3. contracts for Commercial Aviation Services (as defined in 41 C.F.R. 102-33.20 (2004)) that follow the attached interim policy from NMAO.

Assistant Administrators, Deputy Assistant Administrators or Staff Office directors may request an exemption from this stand-down from the NMAO Director in consultation with the NOAA General Counsel. Exemptions will be granted sparingly and only if exceptional circumstances exist.

Rear Admiral Samuel P. De Bow, Jr. has begun a safety review of non-NOAA aircraft in order to provide a policy for NOAA by April 1, 2005. This stand-down shall remain in effect until a safety program for use of non-NOAA aircraft is approved by the NOAA Executive Council.

Please view the interim policy from NMAO using the link provided below.

[http://www.pco.noaa.gov/documents/Interim\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.pco.noaa.gov/documents/Interim_Policy.pdf)

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