



Tourist Flight Operators

AIRCARE™  
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## **AIRCARE™ and Tourist Flight Operators**

### AIRCARE™ - where did it come from and what is it?

In 2010 a stalemate between the Milford Aviation Operators and the Department of Conservation had reached its second year with no resolution to access to Milford. DOC was trying to manage the noise at Milford and was doing that by curtailing the operations of some operators whilst restricting the number of landings by others.

In an attempt to enable operators to have their access to Milford restored the NZ Helicopter Assn asked DOC if it would consider opening up Milford again if all the operators who went there were operating in accordance with best practice in respect to noise. DOC said that it would consider this approach so a Noise Abatement Code of Practice was developed. This code was widely circulated for consultation and meetings were held at Wanaka and Queenstown in October 2010 for this purpose. One of the outcomes from consultation was that members said that the code needed to cover aeroplanes as well as helicopters as fixed wing were just as affected by the Milford decision as helicopters. The code was changed to include aeroplanes too. DOC then said that whilst it was good to have a code of practice, they asked what the mechanism was by which it could be assured operators were complying with that code.

That was when the AIRCARE™ brand was resurrected. Two other considerations to using that brand were that NZAAA (Agricultural Aviation Assn) had its own accreditation program that needed rebranding and CAA said it would make Safety Management Systems (SMS) mandatory for 135 operators in 2012. The decision was made to re-launch AIRCARE™ as an industry wide accreditation program with a simple SMS as the management system at the top of it. In fact the elements of SMS that AIRCARE™ requires are:

- A Quality Assurance Process
- A procedure to identify hazards
- A procedure to place controls on those hazards
- A procedure to measure the effectiveness of those controls

In other words a QA Process (currently required by CAA for most 135 operators and a Risk Management process that has been required under HSE Legislation since 1992) *Most operators will be doing these things already.* QA is a *reactive* process; SMS is a *proactive* process and so has obvious benefits for safety.

So what is AIRCARE™? AIRCARE™ is an integrated accreditation program for *all* of an aviation business. It brings flight safety and environmental safety together for the first time under one safety management system. The AIRCARE™ brand itself is owned by AIA and those businesses who become accredited are entitled to use the brand to promote themselves.

So an SMS Guidance Manual was produced. It's in two parts. Part 1 deals with SMS and can be altered by manual holders and Part 2 details the rules for the accreditation program – and that cannot be altered by manual holders. This manual can be downloaded free of charge by AIA members from [www.aia.org.nz/aircare](http://www.aia.org.nz/aircare) There should be significant savings by using this document to satisfy CAA requirements instead of writing your own or using a consultant.

DOC had input into the SMS Manual and on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2011 announced that the AIRCARE™ Program was sufficiently robust to satisfy its requirements and that it would give operators until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to get AIRCARE™ Accredited because following that date it would require all of its aerial contractors and concession holders to be AIRCARE™ Accredited as a condition of access. As a bonus, DOC agreed to giving operators much longer term concessions than has been the case in the past – provided they are AIRCARE™ Accredited. DOC understands that few if any operators can commit to quieter new technology aircraft if they have only a three or five year concession. So when you apply for a new concession ask for 15 – 20 years and say you need the longer term to give you the certainty to be able to invest in quieter aircraft. (The advice in the last sentence came directly from DOC.)

#### AIRCARE™ Accreditation – what is the process?

The process is straightforward. There are essentially three components:

- 1) Individual competency for pilots. Pilots are required to hold a Noise Abatement Certificate that they get by passing an assessment following a noise abatement course.
- 2) The company has to have QA and Risk Management procedures.
- 3) The company has to satisfy the AIRCARE™ Auditor that it complies with the Noise Abatement Code of Practice and the SMS Manual.

More detail of this process is available in a document called *AIRCARE™ Guide* which can be found at [www.aircare.co.nz/resources](http://www.aircare.co.nz/resources)

#### How is this process made easy?

AIRCARE™ is an *enabling* process. It *enables* operators to have certainty of continuity of business. It should not be seen as another layer of compliance with no value. And because AIA believes in *enabling* business, all of the processes have been developed to be simple.

Take the three points above:

- 1) The Noise Abatement Certificate course is a once in a lifetime face to face course for pilots who work for an operator who seeks accreditation. The certificate has a life of three years but subsequent renewals can be accomplished on-line. Once accredited the operator will need to develop a training package for any other pilots he employs

who do not hold a certificate. No one expects an aircraft to sit on the ground because a pilot hasn't attended a formal Noise Abatement Course. The Noise Abatement Courses are being run throughout the country at a set fee of \$250 + GST per person. If some pilots are unable to attend any of these courses the trainer can return and deliver another course but such courses would be at full cost recovery.

- 2) The majority of operators will already be running a QA Program and nothing in this needs to change except that as well as reporting flight safety incidents, operators also need to record environmental incidents e.g. Noise complaints. Risk Management should already be a part of a business because that is what has been required by HSE Legislation since 1992. AIRCARE™ SMS takes it a little further by *quantifying* the risks. All business owners should find this process very worthwhile. For more information go to [www.aircare.co.nz/resources](http://www.aircare.co.nz/resources) and look at a document titled *Some Help on Risk Management and SMS*.
- 3) In regard to the audit, AIA contracted a company called Navigatus Consulting Ltd who, at AIA's request, in turn contracted auditors who currently work for Tourist Flight Operators as internal auditors. The intent is *less* compliance, not more and so it makes sense to combine this audit with another one where that is possible.

## FAQ's

Q. Is AIRCARE™ Accreditation compulsory?

A. No. It is a voluntary program that delivers privileges to those who take part.

Q. My pilots and I have all qualified for a Noise Abatement Certificate. Won't DOC accept that?

A. No DOC has said that the company has to be AIRCARE™ Accredited to give DOC the confidence the codes are being followed.

Q. Do I have to join AIA?

A. At the moment the rules say you do have to be a member but this is under discussion.

Q. We already have noise abatement procedures so why do the course?

A. The AIRCARE™ requirement is that pilots and operational staff hold an AIRCARE™ Noise Abatement Certificate. Once accredited your material will no doubt be useful for qualifying new pilots.

Q. How will an auditor know that we are operating in accordance with the Noise Abatement Code of Practice?

A. The short answer is that he will not know for sure because like any audit, all he/she is doing is taking a snapshot of your business. The code requires you to develop

SoP's in respect to noise mitigation and agree with DOC on various flight paths. Showing evidence of these should satisfy the auditor.

Q So what does it cost to become accredited?

A. Once all the pilots hold Noise Abatement Certificates the company can make application. The application fee for members is \$500 +GST. The only other fee is the audit fee of \$95 + GST per hour plus disbursements. If an operator has downloaded the audit checklist from the website and has all his ducks in a row, the audit should not take more than an hour and a half or two hours. In terms of disbursements, this amount will be minimized by using an auditor that already works in your patch. These costs can be further reduced by working with other operators to combine audit days and therefore make further savings to travel costs. In other words, there are at least three things you can do to minimise the cost.

Q. How often do we get audited?

A. One year after the initial audit then at up to three years at the discretion of the auditor.

### Conclusion

The *industry* has developed this program for the *industry*. AIRCARE™ is an *enabling* program that operators can choose to adopt to help ensure the long term sustainability of their business.