	VATSIM Network United States Division	SOP/Policy/Procedure #	USADP-003
		Revision #	6
	General Events Policy	**Implementation Date**	11/09/2023
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Superseded SOP/Policy/Procedure	Policy # DP003 VATUSA General Events Policy Revision 5 Dated 11/07/2022	**Approval: Brandon Barrett**	

1. DOCUMENT STATUS

1.1 This policy revision supersedes any previous revision of this document

1.2 The following changes were incorporated in this revision:
- Large-scale change to FNO policy, including single-field FNO bidding rules, regulations for multiple FNOs in a cycle, rules for canceling FNOs, annually recurring event classification, and specific times for FNOs
- Amended rules for posting recurring events
- Changed and clarified event posting rules
- Clarified Event Coordinator expectations
- Removed Ramp Control policies
- Changed ACE Team application process and clarified rules on 'calling' ACE
- Large-scale change to Command Center policy, including NTMS applications, TMI implementation rules, facility coordination requirements, and PERTI and Hotline rules

2. PURPOSE

To establish division-wide clarification and standardization on the process for preparing for, hosting, and reviewing events within VATUSA.

3. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the VATUSA division and all subdivisions within.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 Friday Night Operations (FNO): A key recurring VATSIM event, owned by VATUSA but usually delegated to be planned and coordinated by facilities, that attracts a significant number of pilots and controllers

4.2 Live Event: Any Division or Facility event that has an in-person attendance of at least four (4) controllers

4.3 VATUSA5: VATUSA Events Manager

4.4 ACE Team: A group of highly skilled controllers that volunteer to assist facilities with event staffing

4.5 Event Coordinator (EC): A support staff position at the facility level in charge of organizing, supervising, executing, evaluating, and representing their facility for all things events

5. POLICIES & PROCEDURES

5.1 Friday Night Operations (FNO)

5.1.1 The FNO calendar is broken into two cycles: January through June and July through December. FNO dates are bid on by facilities in October and April. Only Event Coordinators (ECs) and facility senior staff are eligible to bid on behalf of their facility.

5.1.2 All facilities are guaranteed an FNO slot for each cycle, however it is possible they will not obtain their requested date. Dates will be assigned to ensure the FNO featured fields move around the nation week-by-week, mainly to avoid controller fatigue and meet other operational goals.

5.1.3 Annually recurring events with a significant history will have first priority on bidding. To qualify, the event must have been held the previous three out of four years, with at least one of those years being an FNO. The event must be in a similar timeslot each year (within a month).

5.1.4 A facility may have more than one FNO for a cycle if their other slot is for a live event, an annually recurring event, or if they request a second FNO through the additional bidding process, which will be conducted after the general bidding process is completed. Additional FNOs will be rewarded primarily based on what fits best into the calendar slot given the geographical location. Facilities may not receive two single-field FNOs in one cycle.

5.1.5 Facilities are not required to bid for an FNO. If VATUSA does not receive a bid from a facility, the division will assume the facility would not like to hold an FNO in the respective cycle.

5.1.6 For each cycle, there will be 10 slots available for single-field FNOs. If more than ten facilities bid for a single-field FNO, VATUSA will determine the awarded slots based off of past performances (including DCC and neighbor cooperation), AAR and ADR capacity, current roster health and activity, and the overall calendar.

5.1.6.1 The featured airport in a single-field FNO must have a realistic/standard config VATSIM AAR of at least 80 (visit https://perti.vatcscc.org/configs or contact the DCC to find an airport's VATSIM AAR/ADR).

5.1.6.2 An airport with a realistic/standard config VATSIM AAR of at least 60 may bid for a single-field FNO provided the facility can provide a documentation package including: an example TMI briefing that may be required for their airfield, proof of previous staffing success with low ACE Team involvement, approximate staffing numbers required for the single-field event, and a statement of support from all tier 1 facilities. The DCC is happy to assist in the compilation of this documentation.

5.1.6.3 A facility may appeal their VATSIM AAR if they believe it is inaccurate. All appeals should be made to the DCC, and reconsideration is not guaranteed.

5.1.7 For all bids not granted a single-field under 5.1.6, the featured fields' realistic/standard config VATSIM AARs must combine to be at least 100.

5.1.8 There will typically be two dates per cycle available for international FNOs. International facilities are offered slots after the general bidding process has completed.

5.1.9 There will typically be two dates per cycle reserved for divisional "Light Ups" (i.e. Light Up America)

    5.1.9.1 Facilities are highly encouraged to staff for divisional Light Ups. Facilities must provide reasoning if they are unable to staff at least a center controller.

5.1.10 All Fridays on the VATUSA Events Calendar are reserved for FNOs between 2100z and 0600z^{+1}. No facility may schedule an event on any Friday during this time unless they are delegated the FNO slot.

5.1.11 If a facility determines they will be unable to host the FNO that they previously were awarded, they must make all efforts to swap dates with another facility. Any facility that cancels their FNO within 30 days of the FNO date may lose their guaranteed bid for an FNO in the subsequent cycle.

5.1.12 FNOs should be posted by the host facility at least 4 weeks prior to the event, and they must be posted no later than 3 weeks prior.

5.1.13 Facilities must comply with requests from the division relating to FNOs, including requests for event planning, staffing levels, and neighbor communication.

5.2 Facility Sponsored Events

5.2.1 VATUSA will endorse only one event for a given date and time on the Events Calendar. When a facility books an event in accordance with 5.4, that facility owns that time. No facility may book an event that overlaps with an event already posted on the calendar, provided that event meets all posting requirements as detailed in 5.4, unless approved by the Events Manager.

    5.2.1.1 Events that are greater than 24 hours are excluded from this restriction, except for the first four hours and last four hours, where there may be no overlap with another event.

5.2.2 Saturday night events, occurring between 2100z and 0600z^{+1}, may not be booked on the VATUSA Events Calendar more than 6 months in advance.

    5.2.2.1 Live events may be published onto the calendar up to 18 months in advance. Facilities may not publish their Live to the calendar prior to solidifying the date of the live event.

5.2.3 Recurring events, such as weekly regional nights, may not be booked more than 21 days prior to each edition of the event, except for the first two editions of the event, which may be posted at any time.

5.2.4 Use of the word "Live" in event titles, descriptions, banners, or any other event-related information is restricted to those events meeting the definition of a "live event"

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described in 4.2.

5.3 Interdivisional Events

5.3.1   Facilities must include the VATUSA Events Manager in all interdivisional event coordination and communication (e.g. joint events with VATCAN, VATMEX, VATCAR, etc.). This does not include support staffing requests.

5.4 Event Submissions

5.4.1   Event postings to the VATUSA Events Calendar must contain the following in the description section of the posting at the time of publish:
   ➢ Date and time of the event, including both start and end times (zulu time is required, local time is optional)
   ➢ Featured airports (ICAO or IATA codes)
   ➢ Title and theme
   ➢ General description of the event

5.4.2   All events posted to the Events Calendar must have a banner in 16:9 format (1920x1080, 2048x1152, etc.) at least 14 days prior to the event. Events posted within 14 days of the event must include the banner at the time of posting.

5.4.3   All events on the VATUSA Events Calendar must be posted on the my.VATSIM events calendar at least 14 days prior to the event date. Events may not be posted within 10 days of the event date.

5.4.4   Events may not refer to any real-world event, aviation related or not, that involves injury or loss of life. This includes, but is not limited to, 9/11 or air disaster memorial flights, and events that honor victims of a tragedy.

5.4.5   Event titles, banners, and descriptions may not contain the following:
   ➢ Bullying, disrespect, or bigotry towards a specific group
   ➢ Politically-dividing content
   ➢ References to alcohol, drugs, or other adult content
   ➢ Any other hateful, demeaning, or inappropriate content as determined by the VATUSA Events Manager

5.4.6   Event Coordinators whose posts do not meet the requirements in 5.4.1 or 5.4.2 will be notified by the Events Manager. In most cases, the EC will be allowed 24 hours to fix the posting. If the posting is not fixed in 24 hours, it will be removed by the Events Manager. Facilities may not post to the Events Calendar to "hold a date & time." Live events following 5.2.2.1 are not subject to this provision or 5.4.1.

5.4.7   The VATUSA Events Manager is responsible for posting Cross the Pond, WorldFlight, 24 Hours of VATSIM, Light Up America, Open Mic Nights, and any other division-wide large-scale events to the VATUSA Events Calendar.

5.5 General Event Coordinator Responsibilities

5.5.1 Event Coordinators must check the VATUSA Events Calendar routinely for events at surrounding facilities, tier 1s, and post significant events to their facility's website to garner support staffing.

5.5.1.1 Significant events are defined as all Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday evening events, and all weekday events at a Class B. Facilities may request additional events to be supported besides those that fit the significant event definition.

5.5.1.2 Tier 1 facilities must support FNOs, particularly single-field FNOs.

5.5.2 While facilities should check for adjacent facility events on their own, event hosts should still request/confirm staffing at least 3 weeks prior to the event date.

5.5.3 Event Coordinators must regularly check the VATUSA Forums, the VATUSA Discord, and the DCC Discord to keep up with any discussions and or announcements pertaining to events. The VATUSA Discord is the official medium of communication. ECs and facility senior staff will be pinged for important discussions.

5.5.4 Facilities must have personnel, ideally the Events Coordinator and their team, equipped to operate as TMU during an event. ECs will receive TMU training during their onboarding. Prior to hosting an FNO, ECs must communicate with the Command Center to receive TMU training if there is a knowledge gap present.

5.5.5 Every effort should be made to schedule large-scale events, such as single-field Saturday night events, on different weeks than large-scale neighboring events. FNOs should be used as a baseline calendar, and all Saturday events should fit between. ECs must do their best to ensure that no facility, including themselves and their neighbors, is required to staff on back-to-back nights for incredibly busy events.

5.6 ACE Team

5.6.1 ACE Team applicants, assuming they meet the below requirements, can apply to join the team by emailing the VATUSA Events Manager with their details and a short paragraph detailing why they want to join the ACE Team and how they would contribute to the team. Letters of Recommendation should be submitted directly to VATUSA5.

➢ Be an active C1 or higher in their current home ARTCC
➢ Have held the C1 rating for at least 6 months at the time of the application
➢ Have a minimum of 300 hours of ATC controlling time since C1 promotion
➢ Possess a positive and professional attitude with a willingness to help others
➢ Have a letter of recommendation from the TA or ATM of the member's home ARTCC. The letter must assert that the controller is of high quality, has a multitude of experience controlling high traffic events, and does not have a record of receiving bad feedback
➢ Pass the VATUSA ACE Team written examination

5.6.2 Facilities can request ACE Team for an event by emailing the VATUSA Events Manager,

posting a message to the #aceteam-requests channel in the VATUSA Discord (requests should include date and time and the number of controllers requested), or posting to the ACE Team forum.

5.6.3 Only facility staff and Command Center staff are permitted to request ACE Team. Command Center staff may only request ACE Team on behalf of a facility during an event when a facility representative is nonresponsive or unavailable.

5.6.4 Within one week of the conclusion of the event, a staff member from the requesting facility must fill out the ACE Member Participation Form at https://vats.im/acereport

5.6.5 ACE Team members must act as an ACE Team controller at least once every six months (January through June and July through December) to remain an ACE Team member.

5.6.6 ACE Team members are expected to be high quality controllers who demonstrate professionalism at all times. Members who show a pattern of poor performance, whether it be in quality or professionalism, will be removed from the team by the VATUSA Events Manager.

5.6.7 ACE Team controllers may only control positions that the CIC designates during the posted event time. ACE controllers may not control outside of this time or on other positions unless they hold a certification for said position.

5.7 Division Command Center (DCC)

5.7.1 The Division Command Center is responsible for monitoring and managing the flow of air traffic throughout the National Airspace System (NAS) to produce a safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of traffic while minimizing delays. Traffic Management Units (TMU) are responsible for monitoring and balancing traffic flows within their respective areas of responsibility in accordance with traffic management directives.

5.7.2 The Command Center is responsible for:
  - Implementing national traffic management programs
  - Monitoring and analyzing system components and weather patterns for potential system impact
  - Determining when the implementation of a traffic management initiative (TMI) is required
  - Acting as the authority for interfacility traffic management initiatives
  - Creating future plans for traffic management that affect multiple facilities
  - Communicating all of the above with facilities
  - Resolving operational disagreements between facilities during events

5.7.3 The Command Center has two groups of staff, the National Traffic Management Team (NTMT) and National Traffic Management Specialists (NTMS). The NTMT is responsible for the operations of the Command Center, and the Team will routinely delegate responsibilities to NTMS'. The VATUSA Events Manager acts as the chair of the NTMT. In addition to 5.7.2, the Command Center staff are responsible for:
  - Creating and managing TMU training programs that benefit facility staff

➤ Organizing telecons and PERTI plans as necessary

➤ Encouraging and supervising operational communication between facilities

➤ Acting as a TMU in VATUSA

➤ Managing all other day-to-day operations of the Command Center

5.7.4 NTMT members are appointed by VATUSA. NTMS applicants may apply by emailing the VATUSA Events Manager with their details and a short paragraph detailing why they would like to join the team, provided they are a C1. Applicants must provide a letter of recommendation from their facility EC or a senior staff member.

5.7.5 Command Center staff acting as TMU personnel on the network should connect with a callsign of DCC_XX_TMU where XX is their DCC initials.

5.7.6 Traffic Management Initiatives (TMIs) are techniques used to balance demand with capacity in the NAS. There are various TMIs that can be utilized, including:

➤ Altitude

➤ Miles-in-trail (MIT)

➤ Minutes-in-trail (MINIT)

➤ Fix balancing

➤ Sequencing programs

➤ Reroutes

➤ Ground Delay Programs (GDP)

➤ Ground Stops (GS)

5.7.7 TMIs create delay and can be burdensome for both pilots and controllers. TMU personnel must employ the least restrictive methods available to minimize delays. TMIs should be monitored and evaluated constantly, and adjustments, including cancellation, should be made when necessary.

5.7.7.1 Facilities marked as providing in the TMI are expected to comply. The DCC should be notified of facilities who fail to comply with TMIs.

5.7.8 All traffic management initiatives must be documented in the National Traffic Management Log (NTML). The NTML is a running-timestamped-record of all TMIs. Only TMUs, facility staff, events staff, and Command Center staff are permitted to post in the NTML. Users looking for assistance in posting to the NTML should consult a member of the Command Center staff. A plethora of documentation is available in the vATCSCC Discord, and a TMI cheat sheet is available [here](#).

5.7.8.1 All TMIs posted in the NTML must be communicated to the providing facilities. The communication should be done through voice, but Discord tagging or messages through a controller client are also sufficient, as long as the providing facility acknowledges the TMI.

5.7.9 Facilities are required, to the best of their ability (while not compromising their ATC service), to log any delays that occur within their facility during an event. The DCC is responsible for assisting with this process. This includes departure delays and enroute arrival delays due to holding. Delay reporting is key to properly debrief and analyze

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events.

5.7.10 Facilities are required to utilize the vATCSCC Discord for event coordination. Facilities should communicate staffing, routing requests, TMI plans, and all other information that is useful to neighboring facilities and/or the DCC. While the DCC Discord is not required to be used for event planning, planning threads can be created in the Discord and are heavily encouraged in order to keep all event information in one place.

5.7.10.1 Facilities must share final plans for events in the appropriate Discord channels. The DCC may request planning status at any time for an event, and facilities are required to comply with this request for all division-owned events, including Friday Night Operations. DCC requests may include TMI plans, staffing plans, and communications with neighbors.

5.7.11 The DCC Staff will create PERTIs for most FNO events and many Saturday night events. Facilities may request a PERTI for any event. Facilities are expected to fill out the PERTI as outlined in the DCC Discord.

5.7.12 The DCC Staff will open a Hotline for most FNO events and many Saturday night events. The DCC Staff will indicate in the Hotline advisory posting which facilities are required to be present. Facilities must comply with this advisory for FNOs.

5.7.12.1 The designated DCC staffer in the Hotline, the National Operations Manager (NOM) for the event, will offer suggested TMIs to facilities during events. These suggestions do not have to be followed, but are highly recommended. Facilities should utilize the NOM to post TMIs for them, measure delays, or perform other duties as they wish. For FNOs, the DCC may act as a TMU for any facility that is nonresponsive/unreachable for greater than fifteen minutes. The NOM must attempt to contact a designated TMU, a CIC, and center controllers prior to taking TMU control.

5.7.13 In addition to the responsibilities outlined in 5.7.2 and 5.7.3, the DCC is a resource for the subdivisions. The DCC can be consulted during events and should be a tool for facilities.