# Interagency Aviation
# Accident Prevention Bulletin

**Subject: NOTAM Location Identifiers and Pointer NOTAM Use**

**Area of Concern: NOTAM Dissemination**

**Distribution: All Airport Operations**

**Discussion:** Recently, a general aviation (GA) airplane flew within 300 feet of a live rappel at the Salmon Airport. Fortunately, all rappellers were off the rappel line and no evasive maneuvers were required of the helicopter. The GA pilot stated that he was aware that rappel operations were ongoing and apologized to the FAO, taking responsibility for becoming fixated on his own operation. The rappel was NOTAM'ed to occur within a 5NM radius, located 15NM east of the LKT VOR, (8NM SSE of the Salmon Airport). Due to the ground conditions following heavy rains, the rappel operation took place less than 5NM SSE of the airport, but still within the boundary of the NOTAM.

> *NOTAM Excerpt: !SMN 06/002 LKT AIRSPACE LOW FLYING HEL OPS WI AN AREA DEFINED AS 5NM RADIUS OF LKT074015 SFC-200FT AGL AVOIDANCE ADZ DLY 1600-0001 1906031600-1906100001*

While reviewing the near mid-air, the FAO, dispatch, crew and pilots looked closely at the NOTAM and discovered that while it was visible on the FAA and PilotWeb internet site, it was not listed under the Salmon Airport NOTAM tab in ForeFlight. The NOTAM was issued based on a radial / DME from the Salmon VOR (LKT), which is over 10NM SSW of the Airport. NOTAMs with a VOR as a location identifier do not automatically appear under the airport NOTAM list in ForeFlight or other flight planning applications. To see the rappel NOTAM, pilots would have to search applications using the VOR's identifier, LKT, or call the Flight Service Station (FSS) directly.

Dispatch expressed their safety concerns to the FSS who suggested creating a Pointer NOTAM. A Pointer NOTAM will cross-reference important information to other locations. When the Pointer NOTAM was created, the rappel NOTAM was visible under the airport NOTAM tab in ForeFlight. An example NOTAM and its associated pointer NOTAM are below, the yellow highlighted portion "points" to the LKT 06/006 NOTAM.

**NOTAM:**

> *!SMN 06/006 LKT AIRSPACE LOW FLYING HEL OPS WI AN AREA DEFINED AS 5NM RADIUS OF LKT037011 SFC-200FT AGL AVOIDANCE ADZ DLY 1600-0001 1906091600-1906110001*

**POINTER NOTAM:**

> *!SMN 06/008 SMN AIRSPACE SEE LKT 06/006 LOW FLYING HEL OPS DLY 1600-0001 1906091600-1906110001*

Pointers always have "**SEE**" in the text—and refer to another NOTAM that shouldn't be ignored.

A NOTAM's location identifier can be an airport, VOR, or ARTCC (Air Route Traffic Control Center). If the event is within a 5NM radius of an airport, the location identifier is the airport. If it is outside of 5NM, but within a 25NM radius of a VOR then the location identifier is the VOR. If the event is not within 5NM of an airport, and not within 25NM of a VOR, then the location identifier is ARTCC and a pointer NOTAM to the nearest public use airport may be created (USDOT Order 7930.2R, January 5, 2017).

The FAA has identified missing enroute NOTAMs as a common issue and recommends pilots check 25NM each side of their route to ensure relevant NOTAMs assigned to VORs and ARTCC are reviewed. There are also planning features in ForeFlight that allow users to analyze 25NM each side of a planned route for weather, TFRs, NOTAMs, etc.

In the future, Central Idaho Dispatch will request Pointer NOTAMs to Salmon airport to ensure the NOTAM is visible on all commonly used flight planning applications. Calling FSS directly will also ensure that pilots have all applicable NOTAMs along their route of flight. Similar situations may also exist when TFRs are created. Pointer NOTAMs can be used to alert aviation traffic that a TFR is in the area. The NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination PMS520 provides additional information on Pointer NOTAMs.

All pilots and crews should keep in mind that NOTAMs for agency operations are often advisory in nature and not restrictive. While operating in uncontrolled airspace, the prevailing rule is to "**See and Avoid**," advisory NOTAMs will not necessarily provide the desired margin of safety.



https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms520.pdf
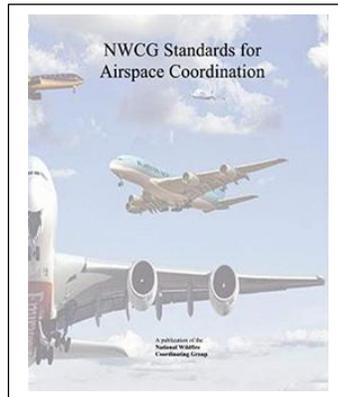
*/s/ Keith Raley*

Keith Raley
Chief, Aviation Safety, Training, Program
Evaluations and Quality Management
DOI, Office of Aviation Services

*/s/ Sean Aidukas*

Sean Aidukas
Acting Branch Chief, Aviation
Safety Management Systems
USDA Forest Service