



Air Observer

Functional Area

Aviation

Core Capability Area

Control

Role Summary

The air observer observes an incident (such as flood, earthquake, cyclone etc, but not fire) from an aircraft and collects and processes information relating to the incident.

While in flight, the air observer may need to communicate directly with ground-based commanders in order to pass on information about the development of the incident or immediate threats to ground crews or the public.*

Aerial observation of an incident is conducted from either a fixed wing or rotary wing aircraft, where the pilot is responsible for flying the aircraft and the Air Observer is responsible for the aerial observation mission. Aerial observation may also be conducted from the ground using remotely piloted aircraft.

* These missions may involve fire response, however in the interest of maintaining an inclusive, all-hazards approach, it is necessary to emphasise the vital role that aviation positions such as these can play in combatting severe weather events of all kinds. It is also necessary to highlight the contemporary emerging shift in staffing to rely on those personnel from supporting agencies who may not have an express need to hold any fire training. In this way, personnel from wider supporting agencies can engage in key roles that allow them to use their expertise where it is most beneficial.

Key duties

The air observer:

- prepares for an air observation mission.
- plans the flight route.
- prepares for flight.
- collects and records incident intelligence information.
- observes and communicates changed conditions and emergencies
- concludes air observation mission according to agency procedures.

Specialist functions

An air observer that performs a specialist function must hold statements of attainment in the units required for the function, as listed below:

Airborne systems operator (PUAFIR009):

- Operates an airborne intelligence collection system, such as advanced aerial mapping, camera or infrared equipment.

Reporting Arrangements

Reports to

Where an IMT is in place, the air observer reports either directly to the planning officer or to the planning officer through the intelligence officer in the situation and analysis unit.

The air observer may also be deployed where an IMT is not in place, such as for land management purposes.

Direct reports

No direct reports.

Role Considerations

An Air Observer must hold a statement of attainment in:

- PUAFIR006 Observe non-fire incident from an aircraft (30hrs)
- 22459VIC – Course in the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) (16 hours)

EMPS Credentials

The following EMPS credentials are relevant to this role:

Air Observer

- PUAFIR005 Observe non-fire incident from an aircraft.
- 22459VIC – Course in the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS)

And hold the required competencies, with statements of attainment in:

- PUAOPE013 Operate communications systems and equipment.
- PUAFIR017 Work safely around aircraft.
- PUAOPE014 Navigate to an incident.

Fitness or Other Standards

The following fitness or other standards are applied by AFAC member agencies to persons undertaking this role:

- Authorisation to perform this role is subject to an agency endorsement period of 5 years.

Please note, this role type has been developed in tandem with the Fire and Emergency Aviation Training and Assessment Framework (2020), therefore references will focus on fire response. However, in the interests of pursuing an 'all hazards' approach to incident management, it is necessary to highlight that the above is not an exhaustive list, and personnel may undertake these duties in responding to events entirely separate from fire response. To this end, key duties and training may vary depending on unique incidents that these resources are deployed in response to.

Additionally, it is necessary to note that there may arise a need for personnel with experience in a variety of aircraft and qualifications or awareness that are not listed within the NPC. Examples include remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) and associated skills and experience such as Remote Pilots Licences (RePL), extended visual line of sight (EVLOS), and night visual line of sight (NVLOS).

In so doing, this outcome aims to reflect the descriptive nature of National Position Catalogue templates, serving as a framework from which agencies can springboard into specific events and responses.

References

- *Fire and Emergency Aviation Training and Assessment Framework (2020)*
- *EMPS Professional Standards: Registered Air Observer (2021)*