

Skyguide raises capacity 20% by restructuring upper airspace

Geneva, 3 June 2010. Skyguide, Switzerland's air navigation service provider, has restructured the upper airspace over the eastern part of the country. The new structure, which was adopted last night, will enable skyguide to handle around 20 per cent more traffic in the upper airspace concerned.

"This additional capacity will allow us to handle all flights at peak times without having to make concessions in punctuality terms," explains Franz-Xaver Heinzer, Head of Air Traffic Management Zurich. Instead of the present capacity of around 100 flights, the new structure will permit some 120 flights an hour to be guided through these upper airspace areas.

As is customary with any major innovation in the air navigation services sector, the capacity of the airspace concerned has initially been reduced for safety reasons, but will gradually be increased again over the next few days. Skyguide has taken various actions to cushion the impact of this temporary capacity reduction. "We'll be deploying more personnel and keeping all airspace sectors open all day over the next few days," Heinzer adds. "And this should help us avoid perceptible delays."

The upper airspace above Eastern Switzerland, which is managed by skyguide's area control centre in Wangen near Dübendorf, extends from 24 500 feet (about 7 500 metres) to 66 000 feet (about 20 000 metres) above sea level. It is primarily used by en-route traffic overflying the country. The airspace is divided into sectors; and the number of these has now been increased from four to six. These sectors can be opened or closed in response to traffic volumes. "Each sector will have two air traffic controllers assigned," Heinzer explains. "And creating the two new sectors has meant recruiting and training twelve additional controllers."

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Skyguide is responsible for providing air navigation services within Swiss airspace and in the airspace of certain adjoining regions in neighbouring countries. The company

guides the civil and military aircraft entrusted to its care – around 3 150 flights a day or 1.15 million a year – through some of the busiest and most complex airspace in Europe. Skyguide is a non-profit limited company which has its head office in Geneva. The majority of its shares are held by the Swiss Confederation. The company generated annual operating revenue of over CHF 362 million for 2009 and employs some 1 400 people at 14 locations in Switzerland. Skyguide is also a member, together with its sister organisations in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, of the FABEC initiative to create a common functional airspace block that will bring greater efficiency to Central Europe's air traffic management services and activities.
