

## **Skyguide takes a further step towards a digital workstation: flight level clearances now electronically processed**

**Geneva, 18 May 2011.** Skyguide continues to make progress in digitising the workstations of its air traffic controllers to the extent that all the information on the various flights under their management can be presented directly on their radar screens. In the latest move in this direction, Switzerland's air navigation service provider has adopted a new system for its Zurich Area Control Centre in Wangen (near Dübendorf) which enables controllers to electronically process the clearances they issue to aircraft to fly at a particular flight level. The new system came into operation in the night of 17 to 18 May.

"This latest innovation simplifies the work processes for our air traffic controllers," says Xaver Heinzer, Head of Air Navigation Services Zurich. "The flight level clearance issued to a particular flight can now be modified directly on-screen with a simple click of the mouse." Under the previous system, such clearances had to be noted by hand on a physical paper strip.

### **Workstation standardisation throughout Switzerland**

Skyguide has been steadily digitising and standardising the workstations of its air traffic controllers throughout Switzerland for several years now. The new system now introduced at the company's Zurich Area Control Centre is based on the "stripleless" system developed in-house by skyguide which has been in use at its Geneva Area Control Centre since 2005. The stripless system is gradually being adopted for the company's Zurich operations, too.

By processing information electronically, the stripless system both increases capacity and enhances safety. A totally stripless system can also process a flight's call sign and heading, and offers further functions which can facilitate the entire planning process. Until this is fully adopted, however, the Zurich Area Control Centre will continue to use paper flight strips in its air traffic management and monitoring activities.

### **More staff and longer sector openings**

As is customary whenever a major innovation is made, the capacity of the Eastern Swiss airspace for which the Zurich Area Control Centre is responsible (i.e. between 4 000 and 20 000 metres above sea level) has been initially reduced for safety reasons, and will only be gradually restored over the next few days. Skyguide has, however, taken various actions to offset these temporary capacity reductions. "To minimise delays, we'll be putting more personnel on duty for the next few days," Heinzer explains. "We're also keeping all airspace sectors open all day." Swiss airspace is divided into a number of sectors, which are either open or closed depending on traffic volumes. Every sector of upper airspace is always managed by two air traffic 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 3 170 flights a day or 1.16 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 total operating revenue of over CHF 365 million last year, and currently employs some 1 400 people at 14 locations in Switzerland. Skyguide is also a member, together with its partner 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.

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