

Disruption from the eruption of the Grímsvötn volcano

Background

The Grímsvötn volcano began large scale eruption on 20 May, as a result it has created a large ash plume which has already disrupted flight operations in Iceland with the closure of Keflavik (BIKF) as well as other parts of Icelandic airspace. As with all volcanic eruptions the situation remains dynamic and IFALPA has been monitoring developments.

As at 1900UTC 23 May the ash plume forecast for 0600z on 24 May from the London Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (London VAAC) calls for high concentrations of volcanic ash (defined as greater than 4,000 micrograms per cubic metre of air) covering most of the Scottish FIR from surface to FL200 as well as lower concentrations (2-4,000 microgrammes per metre³) affecting the northern parts of the London and Shannon FIRs. Between FL200 and 340 the heavy concentration is expected to extend from around 56N 010W in a north-northwesterly direction, above FL340 there is no significant contamination to the south or east of the volcano (the latest forecasting can be found via the UK Met Office website or by clicking [here](#))

London VAAC expects this contamination to extend across the North Sea and into Danish, Norwegian and Swedish airspace by 1800UTC on 25 May. At the time of writing the UK CAA has no plans to close the affected parts of its airspace but expects to issue NOTAMs designating the affected airspace as Temporary Danger Areas.

Additionally, Shanwick and Gander have indicated that they will take into account the ETOPS implications of any Temporary Danger Areas and expect today's North Atlantic Tracks to be developed with Lages, Santa Maria and Bermuda in mind as ETOPS diversions.

Current situation

IFALPA reminds pilots of its position concerning operations near volcanic ash clouds (which can be found by clicking [here](#)) and asks that the comments made in this document are taken into account when flight planning. Particular attention should be paid to the remarks concerning scientific validation of the acceptability of ash contamination with concentrations of 2,000-4,000 microgrammes per metre³. In addition pilots should also be aware that the decision to continue operation into a NOTAMed Danger Area should be considered very carefully even though clearance may be given by ATC to enter the area.

IFALPA will continue to monitor developments and issues further information as required.



