

CORONAVIRUS - RFFS EASEMENTS EMERGENCE OF THEOMICRON VARIANT

Following the emergence of the Omicron variant of the Coronavirus in November 2021 we have reviewed the decision to remove the RFFS easements with effect from 31st January 2022, as communicated on 27 July 2021, and confirmed on 16 November 2021. Government data appears to show that the Omicron Variant is significantly more transmissible than the Delta Variant and as such has placed further pressure on the travel industry. For this reason, we have decided to extend the availability of the RFFS category reduction easement until 31 March 2022 subject to the criteria below.

1. Regulatory Easement

The regulatory easement outlined below is intended to provide aerodrome operators with a degree of flexibility that may be applied within the defined periods. It should be noted that the easement applies only to the provision of RFFS, the aerodrome may have to provide other essential services in line with applicable regulations.

- a) Remission may be applied during the period 17 December 2021– 31 March 2022 (regardless of the number of aircraft movements in the period up to 17 December 2021, or the projected number of aircraft movements after the period 17 December 2021 – 31 March 2022) subject to 1b and 1c below.
- b) The rescue and firefighting level of protection is appropriate to the longest aeroplane normally operating at the aerodrome except that where the number of movements (landing or take-off) of aeroplanes performing passenger transportation in the highest category, normally using the aerodrome, averages less than 20 per day in the easement period (17 December 2021 – 31 March 2022), the level of protection provided may be reduced by one category.
- c) Where the number of movements of the longest aeroplane normally using the aerodrome averages less than 8 per day in the easement period (17 December 2021 – March 31, 2022), a two-category reduction may be applied (see 2d below).
- d) For all-cargo, mail, ferry, training, test, positioning and end-of-life aeroplane operations, with only the flight crew on-board, including those carrying dangerous goods, irrespective of the number of movements, a risk assessment and task/resource analysis may be carried out that focusses on the protection of the flight deck and escape routes of occupants to determine an appropriate level of RFFS protection.

2. Implementation and promulgation of the easements*:

- a) The default position should be to deliver the promulgated level of protection based on the aerodrome's RFFS task and resource analysis and promulgated category.
- b) Implementation of easement in 1a, 1b and 1c above **will require the prior approval of CAA.**
- c) Approval will only be given for cases where the aerodrome operator cannot provide the normal level of RFFS protection due to Covid-19 related limitations, examples include:
 - i. significant reduction in the number of movements by aeroplanes performing commercial air transport of passengers when compared to pre-pandemic levels
 - ii. Significant reduction in the number of passengers onboard aeroplanes operating at the aerodrome (aeroplane load factor)
 - iii. RFFS personnel unavailable due to positive Covid-19 test result

- iv. significant numbers of RFFS personnel self-isolating in line with government guidelines,
- d) Where remission is applied as per 1b and 1c above the aerodrome operator should endeavour to provide the minimum number of RFFS vehicles required for the aeroplane RFF category.
- e) Aerodrome operators should review their RFFS Task and Resource Analysis in order to determine the impact of the reduced level of RFFS protection arising from the implementation of the easement.
- f) Details should be shared with the aerodrome's local authority emergency response partners through the aerodrome's emergency planning forum.
- g) A NOTAM should be issued to alert operators to the revised use of remission and the level of RFFS protection that will be provided.
- h) Implementation of the easement should be continuously assessed through the aerodrome's SMS with sign off by the Accountable Manager.

***Implementation of the easement may introduce an increased business risk to aerodrome operators**

4. Application for prior approval of CAA

Aerodromes who wish to implement the easement detailed in 1a, 1b and 1c above should use the usual process which can be initiated by completing and submitting form SRG2011 which is available on the CAA website www.caa.co.uk

NOTE: Aerodromes with a current approval to implement the RFFS easement and who wish to extend this beyond 31st January 2022 should submit a further form SRG2011.

5. Ongoing monitoring and review

Aerodrome operators should monitor the number of aeroplane movements to ensure that, if the limits of the above easement are reached, the level of RFF protection reverts to pre-pandemic levels.

Data regarding the Omicron Variant continues to emerge therefore CAA reserves the right to terminate the easement described above at any time should government restrictions imposed as a result of the variant be reduced or withdrawn. Equally should government restrictions be increased, or extended CAA will consider extending the availability of the easement.

Aerodrome operators should continuously review any temporary arrangements that are put in place during the pandemic to ensure that collective measures do not impact on the effectiveness of RFFS response and intervention.

6. Contact

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact your allocated aerodrome inspectors in the first instance.



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