[Regulatory Docket No. 7482; Amdt. No. 77-2]

PART 77—OBJECTS AFFECTING NAVIGABLE AIRSPACE

Form and Time of Notice

The purpose of this amendment is to establish an Agency policy applicable to proposals filed under § 77.13 of the Federal Aviation Regulations for any construction or alteration in excess of 2,000 feet above ground. This amendment is a general statement of policy and is procedural in nature. Therefore notice and public procedure hereon are unnecessary and the amendment may be made effective in less than 30 days after publication.

The Federal Aviation Agency has analyzed the recent trend of competitively taller television antenna towers to determine its effect on safety in air navigation. It has long been recognized by this Agency that antenna towers of adequate height are necessary to serve the public interest in a nationwide broadcasting system. However, there has been a proliferation of antenna towers accompanied by a progressive increase in heights over 1,000 feet above the ground that now presents hazardous conditions to the safety of air navigation. The Agency is of the firm belief that the reasonable interests of the communications industry and the aviation community can be accommodated concurrently. To this end, the Federal Communications Commission recently declared in Public Notice FCC 65-455 that "the public interest in broadcast service, may in some instances call for an antenna tower higher than any particular maximum imposed." However, the FCC was "nevertheless convinced that the public interest requires a specific ceiling to halt the upward trend in antenna tower heights, and that 2,000 feet above ground is both realistic and appropriate."

The Federal Aviation Agency, within the limits of its jurisdiction, has attempted to find a remedy for air safety problems inherent in the conflicting demands for a fair and reasonable sharing of airspace by tall towers and aircraft. Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Regulations established procedures for reporting to the Agency proposed construction that may constitute potential obstructions or hazards to safe air navigation as determined by the application of criteria stated therein. Under these regulations, the FAA advises the construction proponent whether his proposal would constitute a hazard to air navigation. During the time the regulation has been in effect, hundreds of proposed television and radio towers have been considered. Procedures permitting such analysis by the Agency have been of considerable value to the aviation community and to the broadcasting industry in eliminating both geographic and airspace conflicts created by their competing requirements.

In spite of steps already taken to ensure the accommodation of these competing interests, it has been determined that the cumulative effect of heights and locations of towers, both actual and proposed, have created a situation that is hazardous to safe air navigation.

On February 18-19, 1965, the Agency made the following statement to the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce concerning H.J. Res. 261, which would limit the height of certain radio and television towers:

> The FCC has allocated the TV channels of the Nation on the basis of maximum power television broadcasting at a height of 2,000 feet. Whenever a television tower exceeds this 2,000-foot limitation in most areas (it is 1,000 feet for VFH TV stations in the eastern part of the United States) the power must be reduced to compensate for the increased height.
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> Therefore, there is no compelling need for any tower to be in excess of 2,000 feet. Although there may be a need for 2,000-foot television towers, under some conditions we would be derelict in our duty as the allocator of the airspace if we permitted all towers to be constructed to a height of 2,000 feet wherever the broadcaster desired.
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> The 2,000-foot tower with its problems of visibility is inherently hazardous to air navigation.

The Agency therefore considers that it is necessary to take steps to minimize the construction of any antenna tower to a height of more than 2,000 feet above ground unless it is fully justified in accordance with this part. This action applies equally to any other structure whose height is proposed to exceed 2,000 feet above ground, even though the most pressing current problem relates to antenna towers. It is expected that this action will encourage proponents of tower or other type construction to formulate realistic plans, thereby avoiding unnecessary and costly proceedings before the Federal Aviation Agency. In addition, the regulation will be flexible enough to accomodate a proposal for a tower or other type construction more than 2,000 feet high in the event the proponent can demonstrate that it would not be a present or reasonable foreseeable hazard to safe air navigation.

It is of course recognized that towers or other structures with heights of less than 2,000 feet above the ground may be hazardous to air navigation, especially where they are located near airports, Federal airways or VFR routes. However, the problems engendered by these situations are totally different from the potential hazards precipitated by the taller towers. Proposed tall towers and other type structures of less than 2,000 feet will continue to be studied carefully on an individual basis to determine whether they present any adverse effects on safe air navigation or cause an inefficient utilization of navigable airspace. The Agency is convinced that from an air safety standpoint the designation of a specific ceiling is needed to halt the upward trend in heights of various type structures. As a general policy, this Agency considered 2,000 feet above the ground to be the maximum height of structures that may be acceptable for maintaining safe navigation. Any structure proposed in excess of 2,000 feet above the ground will be considered to be, inherently, a hazard to air navigation and an inefficient utliziation of the airspace. It will be incumbent upon the proponent to overcome this technical assumption by demonstrating to the Agency that such a proposal will not create an inefficient use of airspace or constitute a hazard to air navigation.

In consideration of the foregoing, Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Regulations is amended, effective July 12, 1966, as hereinafter set forth.

Section 77.17 is amended by redesignating paragraph (c) as paragraph (d), and adding a new paragraph (c) to read as follows:

§ 77.17 Form and time of notice.

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(c) A proposed structure or an alteration to an existing structure that exceeds 2,000 feet in height above the ground will be presumed to be a hazard to air navigation and to result in an inefficient utilization of airspace and the applicant has the burden of overcoming that presumption. Each notice submitted under the pertinent provisions of this Part 77 proposing a structure in excess of 2,000 feet above ground, or an alteration that will make an existing structure exceed that height, must contain a detailed showing, directed to meeting this burden. Only in exceptional cases, where the Agency concludes that a clear and compelling showing has been made that it would not result in an inefficient utilization of the airspace and would not result in a hazard to air navigation, will a determination of no hazard be issued.

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(Secs. 307, 313, 1101, Federal Aviation Act of 1958; 49 U.S.C. 1348, 1354, 1510)

Issued in Washington, D.C., on July 6, 1966.

WILLIAM F. MCKEE,
Administrator.

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