Search and Rescue – FAA Operational Roles and Responsibilities
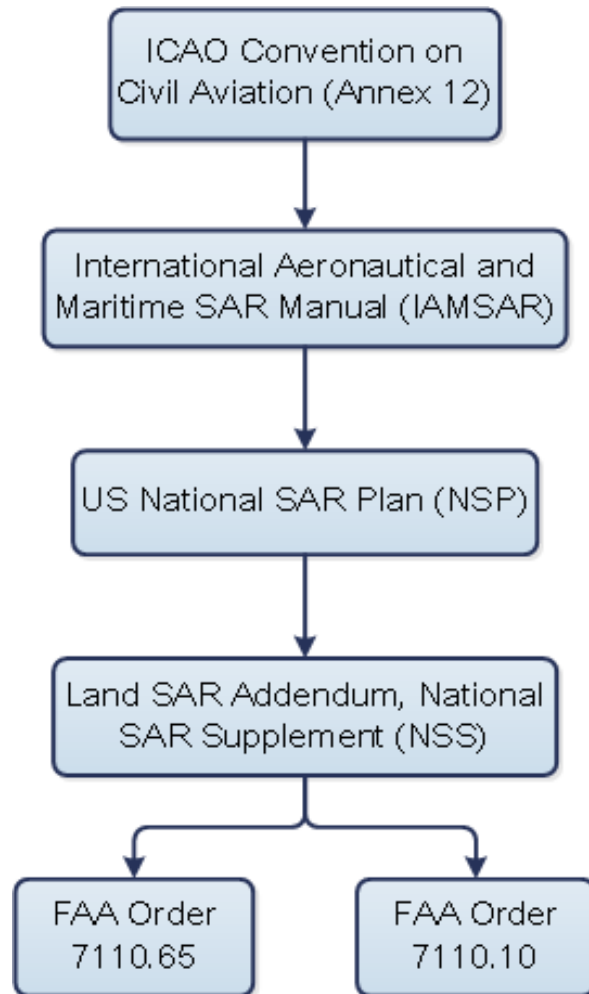
Presented to: National Transportation Safety Board Search and Rescue Forum

By: Tim Arel, Manager, Compliance Services Group

Date: July 17, 2012

National Search and Rescue Governance Documents

FAA Roles and Responsibilities

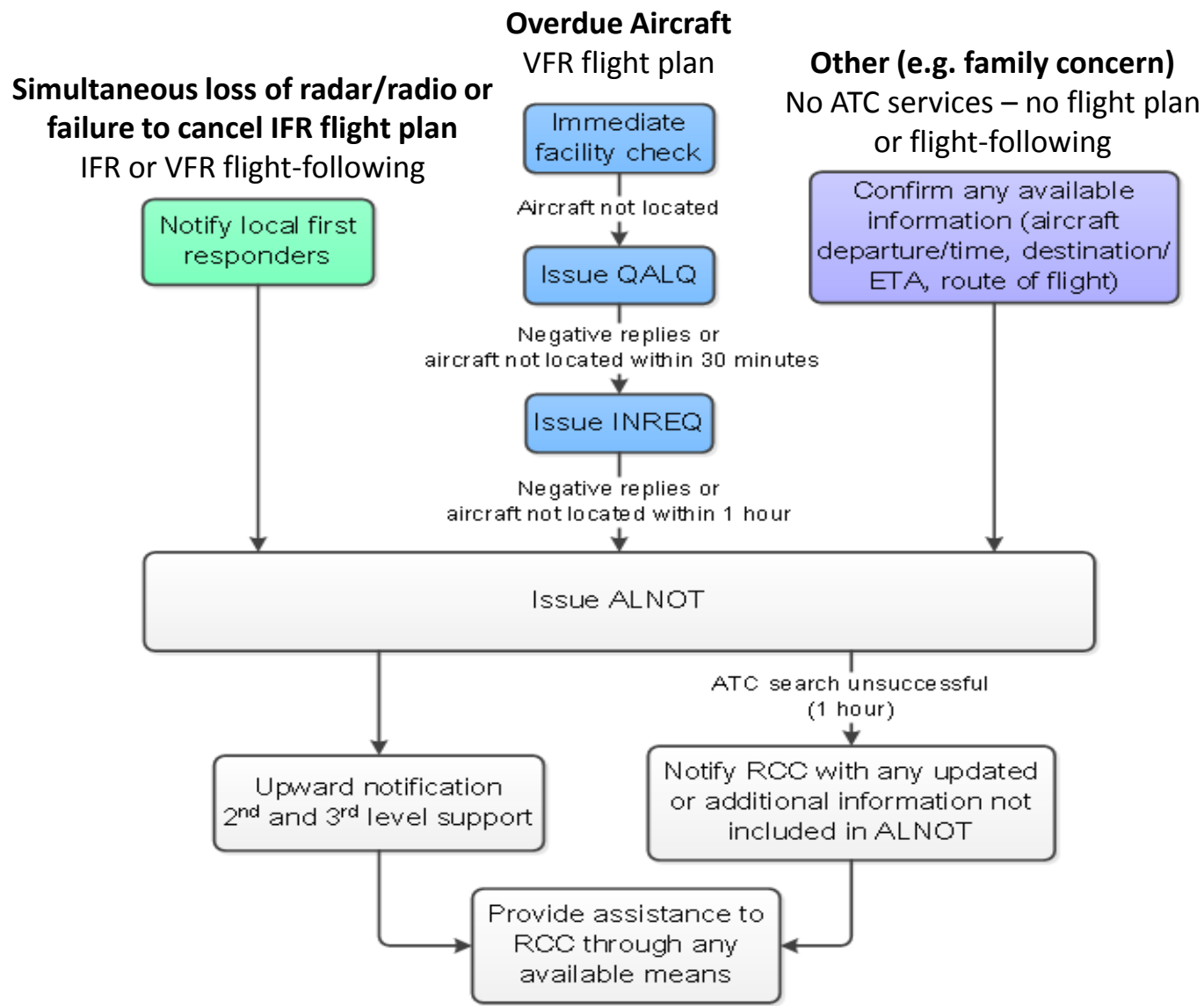**Contact and coordination is required with Air Traffic Control service units**

Guidance on aeronautical/maritime SAR

FAA facilities assist in civil SAR operations

FAA facilities alert the RCC and initiate actions to locate emergency or overdue aircraft by generating information requests (QALQ/INREQ/ALNOT)

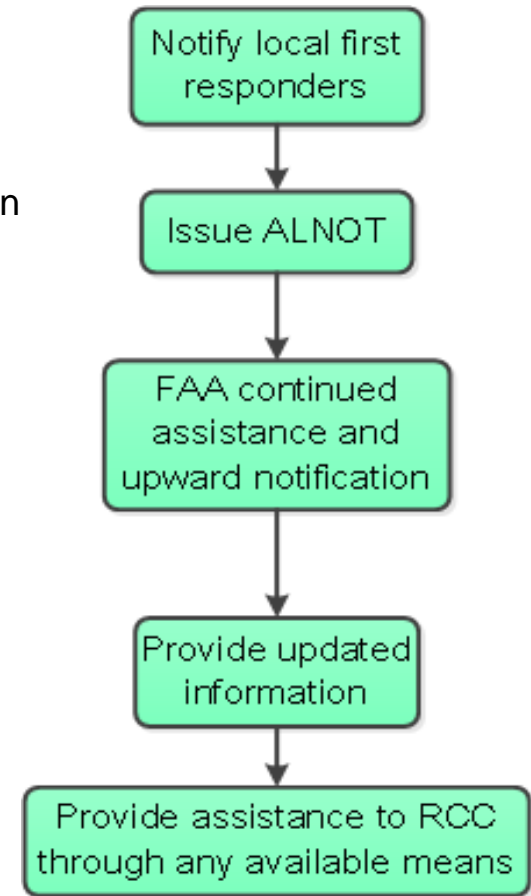**Specify FAA operational SAR procedures**

FAA Search and Rescue Actions

Overdue Aircraft
VFR flight plan

Simultaneous loss of radar/radio or failure to cancel IFR flight plan
IFR or VFR flight-following

Other (e.g. family concern)
No ATC services – no flight plan or flight-following

Immediate facility check

Aircraft not located

Issue QALQ

Negative replies or aircraft not located within 30 minutes

Issue INREQ

Negative replies or aircraft not located within 1 hour

Notify local first responders

Confirm any available information (aircraft departure/time, destination/ETA, route of flight)

Issue ALNOT

ATC search unsuccessful (1 hour)

Upward notification 2nd and 3rd level support

Notify RCC with any updated or additional information not included in ALNOT

Provide assistance to RCC through any available means

Simultaneous Loss of Radar/Radio or Failure to Cancel IFR Flight Plan

23 Centers and 542 Terminal Facilities – Service Delivery Points
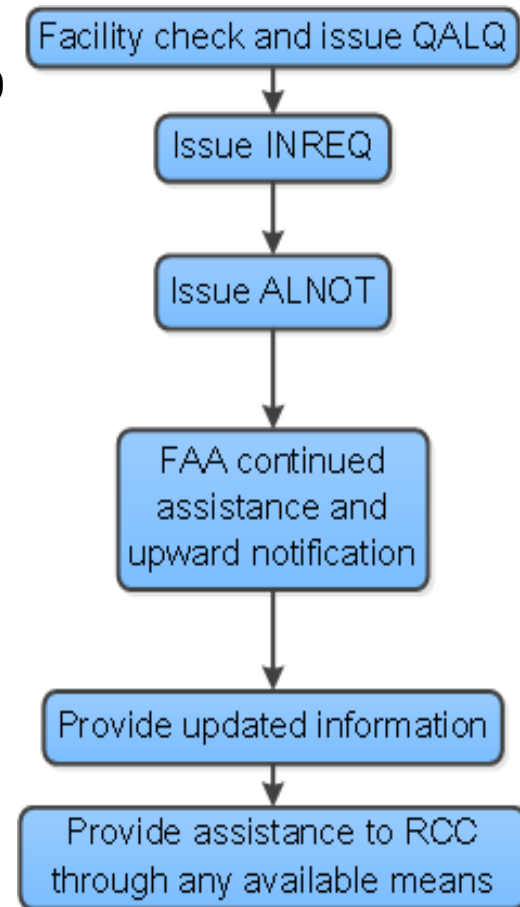
- **Notify local first responders**
  - Aircraft ID/type, pilot information, route of flight, last known position
- **Issue ALNOT**
  - Aircraft ID/type, pilot information, destination/route of flight, last known position, any other pertinent information
- **FAA continued assistance**
  - Extended communication and airport searches, data check, request assistance from aircraft traversing the search area
  - Filed facility starts upward notification to regional and national offices
  - 2nd and 3rd level SAR assistance available
- **If aircraft is not located within 1 hour of ALNOT issuance, notify RCC of any new information not included in ALNOT**
  - Time and frequency of last transmission, ELT signal information
  - Actions taken and proposed actions
- **Provide any additional requested assistance to RCC**

Notify local first responders

↓

Issue ALNOT

↓

FAA continued assistance and upward notification

↓

Provide updated information

↓

Provide assistance to RCC through any available means

Aircraft Overdue – VFR flight plan

23 Federal and Contract Flight Service Stations – Service Delivery Points
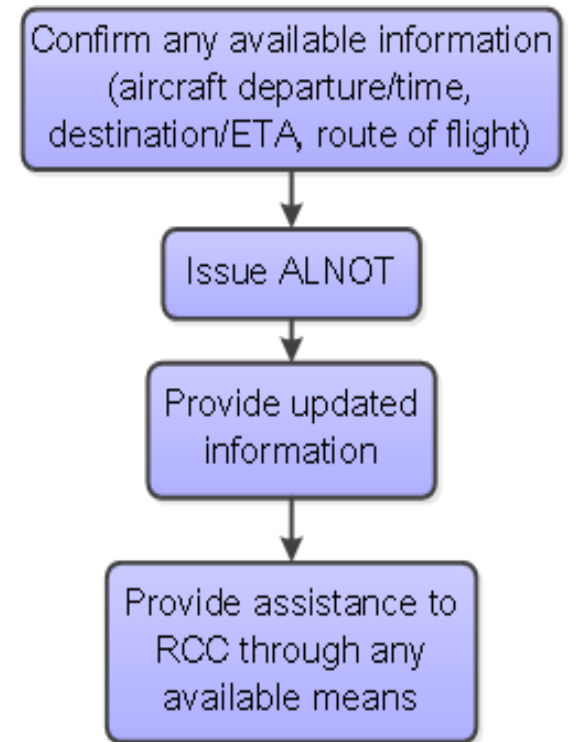
- **Conduct a field/facility check, issue QALQ inquiry**
- **If negative replies to QALQ or aircraft is not located within 30 minutes, issue INREQ**
  - Include known information that may assist in locating the aircraft
- **If negative replies to INREQ or aircraft is not located within 1 hour, issue ALNOT**
  - Include information from the INREQ and additional known information
- **FAA continued assistance**
  - Extended communication and airport searches, data check, request assistance from aircraft traversing the intended route of flight
  - Field facility starts upward notification to regional and national offices
  - 2nd and 3rd level SAR assistance available
- **If aircraft is not located within 1 hour of ALNOT issuance, notify RCC of any new information not included in ALNOT**

Facility check and issue QALQ → Issue INREQ → Issue ALNOT → FAA continued assistance and upward notification → Provide updated information → Provide assistance to RCC through any available means

Other/Family Concern
No ATC services – no flight plan, no flight-following

- **No established process**
  - Virtually unknown to ATC - "needle in a haystack"
- **Provide assistance through whatever means available**
  - Issue ALNOT, call sign search, data check
  - Extended communication search
- **2nd and 3rd level SAR assistance available**

Confirm any available information (aircraft departure/time, destination/ETA, route of flight)

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Issue ALNOT

↓

Provide updated information

↓

Provide assistance to RCC through any available means

2nd and 3rd Level Support

- **Upward notification process - significant events**
  - Three regional Service Areas and FAA Headquarters
- **2nd level support - Service Areas**
  - 24/7 on-call Quality Control Group (QCG)
  - Ensure appropriate SAR actions are initiated, identify and coordinate resources
  - Provide facility-level quality control
- **3rd level support - Headquarters**
  - 24/7 on-call Compliance Services Group (CSG)
  - Ensure proper handling of significant events
  - Available to conduct further radar analysis
  - Provide programmatic quality assurance, follow-up, and training

Calendar Year 2011
331 total ALNOTs

Reason for ALNOT issuance	Number
VFR/IFR loss of radio/radar	107
Failure to cancel IFR flight plan	96
Other/family concern/overdue	**64**
Failure to close VFR flight plan	38
ATC failed to update	13
Mayday	9
Pilot failed to contact ATC	4

262 or 79% were instances of non-distress

Challenges – Past and Present

- **Timely issuance of ALNOTs**
  - All service delivery points recently retrained
- **Accurate relay of last known position**
  - 2nd and 3rd level support ensure appropriate actions taken
- **Unknown aircraft**
  - Absent a flight plan or flight-following, it is challenging for all involved to locate a virtually unknown aircraft
- **Timely and accurate information and coordination ensures the maximum assistance possible**