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# Safe flying: New SOP soon on 5G airwave infra around airports

These are expected to be part of an operational guidelines that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is currently preparing, after India's aviation regulator flagged concerns about interference that 5G signals could cause, potentially posing a challenge to safe airline operations.

Written by [Soumyarendra Barik](#), [Mihir Mishra](#)

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The primary concern of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) emerges from the fact that these altimeters as well as a part of the 5G telecom services operate in the mid C-Band frequency range.

The aviation and telecom departments will shortly roll out a plan to ensure safe flight operations around airports with 5G airwave infrastructure. The plan includes telecom companies setting up infrastructure powering 5G networks in the country away from the flight path around airports, carrying low power signals in such areas and a plan to upgrade the altimeter of all aircraft operating in the country by August 2023, top sources told The Indian Express.

These are expected to be part of an operational guidelines that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is currently preparing, after India's aviation regulator

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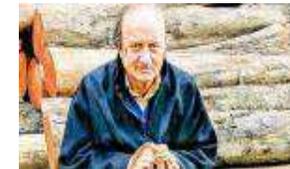
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In June, the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) announced a plan that involved these aspects to ensure safe airline operations.

In September, the Indian Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) wrote to the telecom department flagging concerns over the likely interference of 5G C-Band spectrum with aircraft radio altimeters, The Indian Express had reported. A radio altimeter is an instrument that provides direct height-above-terrain information to various aircraft systems.



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...indicated that it will address all of these concerns, a senior government official told this paper. "It is expected to include setting up 5G establishments a bit further away from airports and lowering the power of 5G signals emitted by these establishments so that there is no interference with flights' altimeters."

Airline companies will also be required to upgrade altimeters used in some aircraft being flown in India. The Indian Express has also learnt that the company that manufactures it has sought for time till August 2023 to upgrade these devices.

## EXPLAINED

### 5G and DGCA concern

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The primary concern of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) emerges from the fact that these altimeters as well as a part of the 5G telecom services operate in the mid C-Band frequency range. Earlier this year, the 6,000-pilot-strong Federation of Indian Pilots had also written to the Civil Aviation Ministry raising similar concerns.

While the 5G network in India is still in its early days, US aviation authorities have reported about 85 cases of 5G waves impacting flight operations near the airport.



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services, ensuring coverage as well as high bandwidth, resulting in faster internet speeds. For aircraft operations, the use of altimeters in this band ensures highly precise measurements of the plane's altitude. 5G terrestrial signals typically operate at a very heavy power level compared to flight altimeters.

Queries sent to the DoT did not elicit a response until publication.

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The DGCA's issues were in line with concerns raised by the US FAA over the last one year since telecom operators in the US, such as AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile etc, began rolling out 5G services. In the US, an agreement between the FAA and the telecom operators resulted in a delay in rollout of 5G services in the C-Band near airports that were assessed to be difficult for pilots to make visual approaches.

Earlier this year, Air India had to cancel some of its flights to the US as airlines globally scrambled to reschedule flights amid concerns that the rollout of 5G mobile services in the US could potentially interfere with aircraft navigation systems. Since then, the FAA has issued several directives to airlines to install certain filters or modify their equipment to ensure that 5G airwaves do not interfere with their navigation systems.

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narrowing sharply, broadcasters have cited multiple incidents of “disruptions” amid concerns over possible interference and potential outages once full-scale 5G services are launched across the country.

Earlier this month, The Indian Express had reported that the broadcasting industry has sent in representations to the government in this regard, citing earlier reports of service disruptions by operators in places, such as Tamil Nadu and parts of West Bengal.

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