

ALERT BULLETIN

2026:25/11-6

7/10/2026

2368765, 2368740

TO: Airport Manager, Merrill Field Airport (MRI), AK, FAA (ATM MRI Tower, AAL-600)

INFO: FAA (AVP-1, AVP-200, AAS-300, AAS-1, AFS-260, AFS-200, Director of Air Traffic Operations WSA, Runway Safety Team), A4A, ALPA, AOPA, APA, ASAP, CAPA, ATSAP, ATSG, ICAO, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NAFI, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA

FROM: Becky L. Hooey, Director
NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System

SUBJ: MRI Airport Procedures

We recently received ASRS reports describing a safety concern that may involve your area of operational responsibility. We do not have sufficient details to assess either the factual accuracy or possible gravity of the report. It is our policy to relay the reported information to the appropriate authority for evaluation and any necessary follow-up. We feel you should be aware of the following:

ASRS received a report expressing concern about confusion surrounding Merrill Field operating procedures, specifically when the Tower is closed. Reporter stated the information available to pilots in the Alaska Supplement and Merrill-specific Part 93 differ from what pilots are being advised by FSDO personnel on-site at MRI. Reporter stated the confusion can result in head-to-head traffic conflicts when the traffic pattern switches to the other direction.

Related report ACN 2368740 is also attached.

To properly assess the usefulness of our alert message service, we would appreciate it if you would take the time to give us your feedback on the value of the information that we have provided. Please contact Dr. Becky Hooey at (408) 541-2854 or email at becky.l.hooey@nasa.gov.



Aviation Safety Reporting System
P.O. Box 189 | Moffett Field, CA | 94035-0189



ACN 2368765**DATE / TIME**

Date of Occurrence	202605
Local Time Of Day	1801 to 2400

PLACE

Locale	MRI.Airport
State	AK

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

Make Model Name	No Aircraft
Operating Under FAR Part	91

PERSON 1

ASRS Report Number	2368765
--------------------	---------

EVENTS

Anomaly	ATC Issue - All Types
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Anomaly	No Specific Anomaly Occurred - Unwanted Situation
Detector - Person	Other Person
Result - General	None Reported / Taken

NARRATIVE 1

The recent reduction in Merrill Field tower operating hours has created a significant safety concern due to conflicting information being provided regarding after-hours operations.

Pilots are relying on published procedures contained in the Alaska Supplement and Merrill-specific Part 93 references, while others are reportedly receiving verbal guidance from FAA personnel that different procedures apply when the tower is closed. As a result, pilots operating at the same airport are following different expectations for traffic pattern direction, arrivals, departures, and traffic flow.

This is not merely a regulatory interpretation issue; it has become a flight safety issue. Reports from local operators indicate that aircraft are conducting opposite-direction pattern entries and conflicting maneuvers based on differing understandings of the applicable procedures. In some cases, this has resulted in head-on encounters and other situations requiring pilots to take immediate action to avoid conflicts.

Merrill Field is a high-volume airport operating within complex Anchorage-area airspace. During the Alaska summer season, traffic levels remain significant after tower closure, increasing the risk associated with inconsistent pilot expectations and non-standardized operations.

Immediate clarification and dissemination of the expected procedures for Merrill Field when the tower is closed is needed. Whatever the FAA determines to be the correct procedure, it is essential that all operators receive the same information through official channels such as NOTAMs, FAA Safety Team publications, Alaska

aviation outreach, airport safety bulletins, and updates to published guidance. Standardized understanding among pilots is critical to preventing further conflicts and reducing the risk of a serious accident.

SYNOPSIS

Reporter stated conflicting information regarding the traffic pattern direction when the MRI Tower is not operating has resulted in pilots flying opposite direction traffic patterns, causing airborne conflicts. Reporter further stated pattern procedures need to be clarified through NOTAMs or other official channels of communication.

ACN 2368740**DATE / TIME**

Date of Occurrence	202605
Local Time Of Day	1801 to 2400

PLACE

Locale	MRI.Airport
State	AK
Altitude - MSL	900

ENVIRONMENT

Flight Conditions	VMC
-------------------	-----

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

ATC / Advisory - CTAF	MRI
Make Model Name	Small Aircraft
Operating Under FAR Part	91

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	Captain
Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Flying
Function - Flight Crew	Single Pilot
ASRS Report Number	2368740

EVENTS

Anomaly	ATC Issue - All Types
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Anomaly	No Specific Anomaly Occurred - Unwanted Situation
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - General	None Reported / Taken

NARRATIVE 1

There is a safety concern regarding the traffic pattern at Merrill Field when the tower is not in operation. Conflicting information between the Alaska supplement, pilot interpretation versus FSDO interpretation. There is need for immediate clarification on the procedures to prevent an accident when the tower is closed. This goes as far as the FSDO personal giving misinformation regarding the class of airspace MRI is when the tower is not in operation.

CALLBACK 1

The reporter stated they believe the Chart Supplement, Sectional Chart, and Part 93 (Special Air Traffic Rules) indicate that when the Air Traffic Control Tower at MRI is closed, the Class D airspace reverts to Class E and all traffic patterns are right traffic. Reporter further stated personnel from the FSDO have been telling pilots these sources are not regulatory and the MRI airspace reverts to Class G when the tower is closed, requiring left traffic patterns. Reporter stated this contradiction in information results in putting aircraft face-to-face with each other and poses a significant threat of mid-air collisions. Reporter recommended that the FAA provide safety briefings to the pilot community at MRI to resolve the confusion.

SYNOPSIS

General aviation pilot reported conflicting information regarding the class of airspace that MRI reverts to when the Tower is not in operation.