

## Low Flying Aircraft Complaints

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as the government agency responsible for aviation safety, investigates citizen complaints of low flying aircraft through local Flight Standards District Offices (FSDO).

The minimum safe altitudes, as defined in the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 FAR 91.119) are:

### § 91.119 Minimum safe altitudes: General.

Except when necessary for takeoff or landing, no person may operate an aircraft below the following altitudes:

(a) *Anywhere*. An altitude allowing, if a power unit fails, an emergency landing without undue hazard to persons or property on the surface.

(b) *Over congested areas*. Over any congested area of a city, town, or settlement, or over any open air assembly of persons, an altitude of 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle within a horizontal radius of 2,000 feet of the aircraft.

(c) *Over other than congested areas*. An altitude of 500 feet above the surface, except over open water or sparsely populated areas. In those cases, the aircraft may not be operated closer than 500 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure.

(d) *Helicopters*. Helicopters may be operated at less than the minimums prescribed in paragraph (b) or (c) of this section if the operation is conducted without hazard to persons or property on the surface. In addition, each person operating a helicopter shall comply with any routes or altitudes specifically prescribed for helicopters by the Administrator.

If a citizen believes that an aircraft has violated this regulation, a complaint can be filed with the local FSDO. The Flight Standards Inspector will request factual information to support your complaint, such as:

- *Identification*: Type of aircraft, registration number on the aircraft, color or other identifying information about the aircraft, etc.
- *Time and place*: When and where did the incident occur, in what direction was the aircraft flying, etc.
- *Altitude*: How low was it flying and how did you estimate that height? Were there objects you used as a point of reference? Did you take photographs or were there any other witnesses to support your estimate? (Be prepared to provide names, addresses and phone numbers so the inspector can contact them.)

If you feel a violation has occurred and you are prepared to provide supporting facts such as those listed above, a complaint can be filed with the Van Nuys Flight Standards District Office, which oversees the Malibu area:

Van Nuys Flight Standards District Office  
FAA Western-Pacific Region  
16501 Sherman Way, Suite 330  
Van Nuys, CA 91406  
Phone: (818) 904-6291  
Fax (818) 786-9732

For further information, click on one of the following links:

[Federal Aviation Administration, Low Flying Aircraft Complaints Information](#)  
[Federal Aviation Regulations, Title 14: Aeronautics and Space](#)  
[Van Nuys Flight Standards District Office](#)