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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRENCH SPACE OPERATION ACT FOR LAUNCHERS, AND
CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONTROL OF RISKS

Abstract

France has enacted the French Space Operation Act (FSOA) in June, 2008. The initial objective of this act was to set up a legal frame for space activities, appropriate to protect people against the associated hazards which surround inevitably all space operations. The main purpose of the FSOA is to be consistent with the international conventions ratified by France and to give a favourable environment for the competitiveness of the operators taking into account the security requirements.

Each space operation has to obtain an authorisation from the ministry in charge of space (ministerial decree) establishes on a CNES technical conformity advice.

The objective of this article is to highlight the first implementations of this act in the field of launchers. We present the origins of regulations and their final contents, and we show how the respect of regulations and the associated controls contribute to minimize the risk without damaging the competitiveness of the launch sector.

We will show in particular that the technical requirements of the regulations were built on the basis of the best practices and thirty years of experience of Ariane launches. We had to adapt our previous safety rules with a will of standardization, in order to apply them for the new launchers Soyuz and Vega, and later to new launch systems. We will show that the authorization process and the regular operation monitoring contribute to the risk management without disrupting the launch operator.

We present briefly the procedures of authorization and the required files. We also present details about the controls and the way they fit into the processes of launch operators.

Since the 10th of December, 2010, the act was enforced and Ariane 5 has continued its launches, Soyuz (October and December, 2011) and VEGA (February, 2012) have made their first launches from the Guiana space centre, while demonstrating compliance with the regulations and by satisfying the FSOA associated controls.