O-VRAT help text

Updated 25 May 2023

What is it all about?

The AECO Off-Vessel Risk Assessment Tool is a non-mandatory tool to help expedition leaders or others to perform and log risk assessments for landing operations[1]. Risk assessments may be more or less structured and done by conducting observations based on experience, standard operations procedures, etc. This is often not calculated nor methodical although it may add up to a full risk assessment if actions and considerations carried out prior to landing operations would be collated into writing and presented as such. The present legislative environment is pushing towards ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and that documentation exist to that end. This relates to both environmental and safety related considerations. In the O-VRAT tool app, a comprehensive list of environmental and safety topics is covered and offer a way to perform and log risk assessments before any landing to serve this purpose.

The O-VRAT app is built on all sites that exist in the AECO Cruise database[2]. An additional feature of the app is that guidelines or restrictive information deemed particularly relevant to individual sites will feature when accessing that site. While the AECO guidelines overall are always valid, some sites have special features that need extra attention. This could be Site Specific Guidelines, access restrictions to a given site for certain dates/full access prohibitions, specific Community Guidelines, or sites know for cultural heritage that will feature Cultural Remains Guidelines. The aim is to be as comprehensive as possible and any recommendations to link certain guidelines or relevant information concerning restrictions of any kind is welcome. Please contact aeco@aeco.no.

The O-VRAT is a tool that, depending on your individual answers, suggest mitigation methods. Only on very rare occasions will it suggest a complete cancellation of the landing. Hence it is a tool to help the user prepare in the best possible way, but it is not a tool that will make the decisions to go out or not. This decision is still firmly in the hand of the responsible part of the ship's management team. Instead, it enables you to document that a thorough risk assessment has been carried out and remind you about mitigation methods for situations that need extra consideration.

Getting started

The O-VRAT app is unlisted and you will receive the app link when your accounts is registered. However, to access the functionalities of the app, a username and password is required. The app is only available to field staff and other staff working for AECO member companies. Registration is done via your employer. Your employer will send a list of employees to AECO who will then register individuals to access the app.

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[1] Currently only for landing operations but this may be expanded to include other activities at a later stage.
[2] Updates will be made on a continuous basis throughout the season and become functional once a sync with the server has been made.

As the name implies, the app is working as an offline app. Once installation of the app is complete, all guidelines, restrictions, other documentation will be automatically stored on the device for offline access.

Please synchronize with the cloud server (via Profile Page) every time a stable Wi-Fi connection is available. This will ensure that all information is up to date and any risk assessments uploaded to the server and stored.

It is recommended that you reset the default password that was provided when you were registered to use the app. Use this link to reset your password:

https://ovrat2.aeco.no/accounts/password_reset/

Making a new risk assessment

Risk assessments are currently possible for separate landings only. This means one landing – one risk assessment. Ensure that only one official risk assessment per landing per ship is made.

To start the assessment, press the *New Assessment* icon at the bottom of your screen.

Select the vessel you are working on (only for the operator designated officially responsible risk assessments makers onboard – all others will use the default ship B*lack Pearl*).

You are prompted to enter a trip ID (use the official code your employer use for the trip in question).

Search on the site name and find the correct site on the drop down menu.

The assessment consists of four different sections. The *Trip* section will be auto filled with the answers of the first assessment made of any trip ID entered due to factors asked into may not change for duration of the given trip. Adjust the entries from assessment to assessment within the same trip if they have changed.

Each section consists of several questions. Depending on your answer, mitigations methods may appear. Very few cases have a direct no go advise. Use the O-VRAT as a tool to help in decision making and remember that it is not making decisions for you.

Once the assessment is finished press *Complete*. The assessment is now stored locally on your device and cannot be changed. When within Wi-Fi reach again, please ensure to synchronize with the server via the profile menu to upload the assessments to the cloud. Export the assessments if required by your employer.

Frequently asked questions

Can anyone use the app?

The O-VRAT app is freely available for download for iOS and Android in the iTunes App store and Google Play. However, to access the functionalities of the app, a username and password is required. The app is only available to field staff and other staff working for AECO member companies.

How do I get access to the app?

If you work for an operator who is a member of AECO, please contact them and ask them to request a username and password for you.

I know that I am registered but I still cannot log on to the app. Why?

When logging on to the app, you can only use **lower case** letters in your **username.** If the problem persists after trying, please contact aeco@aeco.no.

Will the O-VRAT app be mandatory?

The O-VRAT app has been created as a tool help field staff carry out risk assessment in the field. Use of the app is not mandatory. It will be up to each member to decide if and how they wish that their field staff should use the app.

Can the app be used without internet connection?

Yes, the app is designed to be used in remote areas without internet connection. The user must download the app and regions, which contain maps and guidelines, when they have internet connection. After that, the user can carry out and save risk assessments. The user can also post comments and photos from the sites that they visit. Once the user has internet access again, they can click "Sync data with cloud" to upload their risk assessments, comments and photos.

Who can see the comments that I post from a site?

When visiting a site, users have the options of adding notes. All app users will be able to see this information once their app is synchronized with the server. The purpose of this is to let field staff leave (near) real-time notes about the conditions of a site to help other field staff carry out safe landings.

How is my personal information handled?

In order to create a user account for app users, AECO needs to register data about the user. This includes full name, e-mail address and the name of the AECO member(s) that they work for. This information is provided to AECO by the AECO member(s) that the user in question works for. Your information will be stored securely and will never be sold or disclosed for other purposes. You can withdraw your consent at any time.

AECO uses third parties for storage and processing of data, including IT suppliers. They only process data on our behalf and may not use it for their own purposes, as outlined in the Data Processing Agreement that they have signed with AECO.

AECO is an international organization registered in Tromsø, Norway, and is subject to EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Norway's Personal Data Act. The Norwegian Data Protection Authority (DPA) is the supervisory authority for protection of personal data in Norway.

Who can see the risk assessments that I make?

Every completed risk assessment is accessible to the user who created the risk assessment. In addition, the completed risk assessment is uploaded to a central database once the user synchronizes their app. AECO has access to all risk assessments that have been synched with the central database.

Risk assessments can be exported via e-mail/other to relevant entities.

AECO reserves the right to share risk assessments with the operator that the staff member is working for at the time that the risk assessment was logged. Otherwise AECO consider this material as confidential.

AECO also reserved the right to collect and analyze anonymized data derived from usage of the app and risk assessments, which may be used for statistical and analytical purposes.

What happens if I work for more than one operator?

Each user can be registered as working for more than one operator. When making an *official* risk assessment, the user chooses which operator they are currently working for from a scroll down menu. If your employer has not requested that you are responsible for making official risk assessments, the only vessel accessible is the default ship *Black Pearl.*

I would like to reset the initial default password that I got. What should I do?

Please go to the logon page of the app and press "Forgot Password".

I have forgotten my username and/or password. what should I do?

Please go to the logon page of the app and press "Forgot Password".

I am experiencing technical difficulties with the app, what should I do?

Refer to the O-VRAT user manual. If problems persist, please send an email to aeco@aeco.no for technical support.

Will the app function as field operations manual?

AECO currently does not have a Field Operation Manual as is known from IAATO for example. However, the O-VRAT app is continuously updated with relevant legislation, guidelines, etc. that can help fill the information gap.

How to delete my account

We respect privacy and fully support deleting your entire account record, along with associated personal data. However, since creation of accounts is requested by your employer or the AECO member company you work for, account deletion is unfortunately a manual process, where we need to verify with your company before we delete your account. Please contact aeco@aeco.no and request an account deletion if you wish us to remove your account. We will then proceed with deleting your account and all the data associated with your account. This includes your account details and all other personal data, such as assessments and notes. The account deletion takes some days to be completed and we will inform you on your registered email when the account has been deleted.

What is the background of the O-VRAT app?

AECO was granted funding from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund to develop an Off-Vessel Risk Assessment Tool (O-VRAT). The tool will combine risk analysis with site vulnerability assessment and will help field staff assess and mitigate risks associated with off-vessel activities.

The O-VRAT project was presented to field staff in October 2017 during the AECO/IAATO Polar Field Staff Conference in Iceland. Following the presentation, AECO organized group discussions where polar field staff discussed potential inclusions in the O-VRAT tool. The feedback from field staff was considered when the project working group met in November 2017.

In April 2018, AECO was granted additional funding from the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund to develop an O-VRAT mobile application. In June 2018, AECO signed a contract with Ramm-Schmidt Consulting Ltd for the development of the mobile app. The first version of the app was launched in 2019. In 2023, the app underwent a significant update aimed at incorporating a better and easier user experience, ensure stability, and adding several features.