

Oakland International Airport

Southeast Plan Arrivals Over East Bay Communities

Winds in the Bay Area predominantly blow from the west to the east. With winds from the west, the North Flow air traffic pattern (referred to as the “West Plan”) is in effect. When wind direction in the Bay Area reverses and is from the southeast, the South Flow air traffic pattern (referred to as the “Southeast Plan”) is in effect. The FAA alters the traffic pattern to the Southeast Plan when weather conditions such as winter storms shift the wind direction. Historical data collected by the Airport Noise Management Office demonstrate that 91.5 percent of all arrivals and departures occur when the Airport is operating in the West Plan, which generally involves arrivals from the south and departures to the north.

Because arrival and departure patterns differ under the two plans, noise related to aircraft events is experienced differently depending on which plan is in effect. Under West Plan conditions, areas to the north of the Airport experience noise related to departing aircraft, whereas areas to the south experience aircraft arrival noise. Under the Southeast Plan, the opposite effects occur.

The Southeast Plan is perceived by the public as a dramatic change in the air traffic pattern and the change generates public reaction and aircraft noise complaints. Below, are flight track maps displaying Bay Area air traffic patterns associated with Oakland International Airport (OAK) and San Francisco International Airport (SFO) during the West Plan and the Southeast Plan.

Southeast Plan air traffic routes are frequently implemented during winter months. When these procedures are in place jets will fly over northern East Bay communities on arrival routes to both Oakland and San Francisco International Airport. As displayed by the flight track map, SFO aircraft arrival tracks intersect with OAK aircraft arrival tracks in the North Bay Area. In order to keep these aircraft safely separated, air traffic routes have been established to maintain the SFO arrivals above the OAK arrivals. These routes have long been used and the Federal Aviation Administration is unable to make changes to these procedures.

West Plan Characterization Graphic

