

The NAR and FAI

As most NAR members have seen these past couple of years there has been a noticeable shift occurring within NAR/NRC competition towards FAI-style events. NARAM 66 hosted two events based on FAI requirements, and of the nine events comprising the upcoming NARAM 67, six will be based on FAI rules. So what's going on?

Well, the short answer is really great model rocketry competition in a system that maps directly onto the international stage. Getting good at this puts a rocketeer into a position to place on the USA's international team and the opportunity to compete in the World Space Modeling Championships, the Olympics of model rocketry.

Does this spell the end of the NAR's United States Model Rocket Sporting Code (the USMRSC, commonly known as the Pink Book)? **No, it does not.** The USMRSC remains in effect governing all aspects of NAR-sanctioned model rocketry, including competition. What's happening is an expansion of the code to accommodate FAI requirements and events, creating a sanctioned, inclusive path for those that wish to extend their model rocketry interests to include FAI/international competition. If you're not interested in sanctioned model rocketry competition then your model rocketry life continues unaffected; the Pink Book and the NAR Safety Code still apply.

So then what's all this FAI business about? For that matter, what IS the FAI?

The [Federation Aeronautique Internationale](#) (FAI) was founded in 1905 and is headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. It is a nongovernmental and non-profit international organization with the mission to further aeronautical activities worldwide, and ratifies world and continental aerospace and aeronautical records. The FAI sets the regulations for, and sanctions, aerospace competitions, including model aeronautics and model rocketry. The body is recognized by, and has membership by, more than 90 countries with aerospace activities, and also the International Olympic Committee. The United States is a member country of the FAI, and our governing FAI representative member is the [National Aeronautics Association](#). The [AMA](#) (the Academy of Model Aeronautics), and through it the NAR, is governed by the National Aeronautics Association with respect to the FAI rules for international records, competitions and events.

None of this has any impact on traditional NAR competition or the Pink Book. But what it does mean is if the NAR and its members want to participate in international space modeling competitions then our contestants must be licensed by the FAI and they must build and fly competition models that comply with FAI rules. Expanding the USMRSC (the Pink Book) to accommodate FAI requirements creates a ground floor opportunity for modelers to get familiar with, and excel at, FAI-type competition here in the USA.

It's not as scary or as foreign as perhaps it sounds. At the end of the day, both traditional NAR competition models and FAI models are essentially the same: they go up, they come down, and they have their time duration or altitude recorded. And the FAI rules include the same model rocket motor impulse classes as the NAR (A-G). The differences between traditional NAR regulations and FAI regulations are minor, and are mainly found in the safety code (model rocket construction and launch operations) and in the size of certain types of competition models. Scale events have a slightly different scoring regime for static craftsmanship, with a more stringent emphasis on documentation, and also in mission scoring. In the end, Scale competition in both regimes continues to be about building the best model you can with the highest degree of fidelity to your prototype.

So what does all of this mean to you, an enthusiastic model rocketry hobbyist? Not that much. As a Sport and HPR builder and flyer, all of the NAR rules and regulations for rocket construction, operation and safety still apply, and these are found in the [USMRSC](#) (or Pink Book) and in the NAR's Safety Code. If you're only

interested in traditional NAR/NRC competition flying and events, no problem: those are also covered in the USMRSC, and nothing prevents you or your section from hosting these kinds of competitions or events.

However, if you're a modeler with an ambition to compete for a National Championship, then FAI becomes a sphere of influence for you. Going forward, NARAM will be including some FAI-type events as part of the championship process, in an effort to spur development of both flyers and modelers that can excel in this area of model rocketry.

Expanding the Pink Book with FAI requirements expands the scope and the choices for NAR competition. It's an opportunity to try some of the same old events in a new way, and/or with new models. It also lays the groundwork for educating and preparing modelers for competition on the international stage. Learning and doing new things have always been what model rocketry has been, and will continue to be, about. It's both critical and integral to progressing our forward-looking technological hobby in the years to come. So, give it some thought, and maybe try some of the FAI competition events – who knows? Maybe FAI is exactly what you've been looking for in the hobby.

If you're interested in learning more about FAI model rocketry rules and requirements, please check out the FAI Sporting Code for Space models, found here: [FAI Space Models Sporting Code](#)