

IMACS/LDSS-3 Slit Masks

- **Status of Mask File Submission Software**
- **Late Submissions: a Chronic Problem**
- **New Policy**

Status of Mask File Submission Software

- **Web-based mask file submission software** was implemented for **IMACS** masks in August 2004 (<http://www.lco.cl/masks/>)
- As of 1 April 2006, **634** IMACS mask files have been submitted with this software, **528** of which have been cut
- The software makes life easier for the mask cutters since it provides a uniform method for downloading the .SMF files, generating the .NC files, and uploading these to the control computer of the laser milling machine
- P.I.s are automatically advised by e-mail when their masks have been cut

Status of Mask File Submission Software

- Observers or mask cutters can search the mask file database using several different criteria
- Masks can be cancelled before they've been cut
- The .SMF files for all masks are saved, and can be readily downloaded (e.g., at the telescope where they are needed for mask alignment)
- Mask cutters no longer need to provide accounting & billing information
- It will eventually be possible to upload **LDSS-3 masks** via the same software (by mid-year??)

Late Mask File Submissions: A Chronic Problem

- The cutting of IMACS masks can take between 30 minutes and (in exceptional cases) 8 hours
- Mask cutting was added to the responsibilities of the LCO technical staff **without adding any new positions**
- In order to assure that all masks get cut, files must be submitted at least a month before the first night of the observing run
- This requirement is stated clearly in several places on the www.lco.cl website
- Nevertheless, ***late mask file submission is a chronic problem***

Late Mask File Submissions: A Chronic Problem

- Since the mask file submission software was implemented, **76% of all files were submitted < 28 days before the first night of the observing run**
- Even worse, **25% were submitted < 14 days before the run**
- The problem is consortium-wide

Institution	% Submitted < 28 days before run
Arizona	66%
Carnegie	87%
Harvard/CfA	79%
MIT	74%
Michigan	47%
Toronto	98%
Chile	86%

Late Mask File Submissions: A Chronic Problem

- Late mask file submissions play havoc with attempts to plan the activities of the LCO technical group
- The problem is particularly acute during the Chilean summer months (Dec-Mar) when many of the technical staff take vacation
- However, problems have also been produced in the winter when key personnel have gone on sick leave
- Crises inevitably occur, and in a few cases (despite paying overtime), masks have not been cut in time
- Despite repeated pleas at SAC previous meetings, *there is no evidence that the situation is improving*

New Policy

- **Only mask files submitted at least 6 weeks before a run are guaranteed to be cut in time** (barring, of course, unforeseen problems with the laser milling machine itself or associated equipment)
- If the P.I. cannot meet the 6 week deadline, she/he **must request permission in advance** for the mask files to be submitted late (3-6 weeks before the observing run)
- **Mask files submitted < 3 weeks before a run will not be cut. Period.**
- **This new policy will become effective during the second semester 2006**

New Policy

- A review of mask charges is currently being carried out
- It is likely that **the time that it takes to cut a mask will be factored into its cost**
- A charge for late submission (3-6 weeks before observing run) may also be added
- New costs will be circulated before the beginning of the second semester 2006