

ATSAP Positives Bulletin

October 2015 through December 2015



The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), along with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), developed a confidential voluntary non-punitive reporting system called the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP). An ATSAP Positive is a safety issue that may otherwise not have been identified and therefore not resolved, were it not for the program. The list of ATSAP Positives grows every month and is additional proof that a program of this nature has the potential to proactively improve the overall safety of the National Airspace System (NAS).

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All ATSAP Positives were validated by the Service Area Event Review Committees (ERC) during the FY16Q1 reporting period.

Issue (NAS-Wide): In May of 2010, the Eastern ERC issued CAR-2010-019 regarding *Cold Station Altimeters* and the need for altitude compensation.

Potential Hazard: During extreme cold weather, barometric altimeter errors may occasionally exceed the required obstacle clearance (ROC) for approach segments. Cold weather temperature correction procedures will ensure that the ROC is not compromised.

Positive: The issue was first raised at the Industry/Government Aeronautical Charting Forum as far back as 1992. Although a workgroup was working the topic in 2010, the ERC felt that the issue had languished far too long and issued the CAR. With collaboration from Flight Standards (AFS) and other industry partners, Document Change Proposals (DCPs) were developed and issued for the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM), JO 7210.3 and Air Traffic Control JO 7110.65 for revised procedures. Notice N JO 7110.701, Cold Temperature Compensation, was issued effective December 17, 2015. The final DCP will be published May 26, 2016 bringing closure to the issue after 23 years.

Issue (NAS-Wide): Reports received throughout the NAS submitted via ATSAP identified an issue where aircraft were flying routes other than what was indicated in ERAM.

Potential Hazard: The problem was the result of *Host Embedded Route Text (HERT) and other Route Action Notifications (RAN)* not being issued to aircraft at the appropriate sectors. As a result of these reports, we investigated and found that there was no national direction for what a controller was supposed to do when HERT or RAN coding was present. Instead, it was left to individual facilities to publish direction in local orders if they so desired. It was found that four ARTCCs had no direction at all on how to handle HERT and RAN while the other ARTCCs procedures differed nationwide.

Positive: Subsequently, a Corrective Action Request (CAR) was issued and the resulting Corrective Action Plan (CAP) implemented a standard system-wide procedure for handling HERT and RAN.

Issue: Submitters from Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport ATCT (BJC) reported that when Tech Ops performs daily maintenance on the STARS Displays, the weather settings default back to the original setup display settings.

Potential Hazard: When display settings default back, there is a chance controllers will not notice the new settings and miss critical weather information.

Positive: To resolve this issue locally, the facility Watch Checklist and Position Relief Checklist have been updated with reminders to check radar display for satisfactory operation.

Watch Checklist: Insure STARS weather display is enabled.

Position Relief Checklist: Insure STARS weather preferences are set.

Issue: Submitters from Albuquerque ARTCC (ZAB) reported that ZAB agreed to give Phoenix TRACON (P50) Northern Arizona Airspace (NAA) sectors (JEROME, KACHINA, CROWN) control of aircraft within 5 miles of the airspace. The problem is the MVA map in some areas only goes past the boundary by 3 miles, and in one particular area it shares the same line as our airspace boundary. Controllers have no way of knowing if turns given to an aircraft meet the MVA

requirements.

Potential Hazard: The MVA map needs to be a minimum of 10 miles outside of the airspace boundary, since it is required that we look 10 miles outside of our airspace and do not want to miss critical MVA/MIA's.

Positive: New Maps added on 10/30/15.

Issue: Submitters from Anchorage (ANC) ATCT reported that Merrill Field (MRI) is an airport adjacent to Lake Hood Seaplane Base (LHD) which is also controlled by ANC Local Control (LC). When IFR aircraft arrive at MRI, Anchorage TRACON (A11) gives LC a point out of the traffic. The departure end of RWY 7L and arrival at MRI are less than 3 miles apart and simultaneous radar operations should not be allowed per 7110.65.

Potential Hazard: During IFR conditions, visual separation is not authorized and standard radar separation should be utilized. RWY 7 operations should cease.

Positive: A11 has reverted back to canceling operations off of RWY7 while there are MRI arrivals therefore insuring legal separation.

Issue: Submitters from Anchorage ARTCC (ZAN) reported that the A-side position is being allowed to perform D-side functions that they have not been trained to do and/or are by-passing steps taken by the R/D-side in searching for traffic situations.

Potential Hazard: Expecting controllers that are not trained to do appropriate traffic searches can lead to errors or possible hazardous situations.

Positive: A-Side duties have been clarified via 7110.65 Facility Supplement and A-Side may perform duties (above) with monitoring and at the discretion of the radar team.

Issue: Submitters from Salt Lake ARTCC (ZLC) reported that when trying to bring up sectionals in En Route Information Display System (ERIDS), the files will partially load and then stop. ERID Controller closes and loads again and gets a message saying file is damaged and cannot be repaired.

Potential Hazard: Maps are sometimes required for a quick and detailed reference of an aircraft's location in reference to hazardous terrain.

Positive: The facility deleted un-needed maps and linked quick reference maps to working maps. Additional input from the ATSAP team was very helpful in resolving this issue.

Issue: Submitters from Los Angeles ARTCC (ZLA) reported that MIA Mapping on Sector 6 contains small "Slivers" that are difficult to see and are also equally as difficult to read on overhead charts.

Potential Hazard: The maps need to be updated. The MIA charts on the scope should be easier to read. The different blocks should be outlined so controllers can clearly see where the block is and avoid clearing aircraft into high terrain that is not easily seen.

Positive: After review by the Airspace office, the overhead chart has been amended to reflect the correct information.

Issue: Submitters from Los Angeles ARTCC (ZLA) reported that controllers are not current on the use of Enhanced Back-up Surveillance/Direct Access Radar Channel (EBUS/DARC) and the only available method to refresh on the system is via a very limited Computer Based Instruction (CBI).

Potential Hazard: When all three ERAM channels fail, the only available option is to switch over to DARC; however none of the controllers are current on the use of DARC or EBUS, leading to a potentially hazardous situation if ERAM fails.

Positive: ZLA has created two local CBI's for this training. We believe this is well-done and provides the needed system information. In addition to printed materials, ZLA also incorporated DARC instructions in the ERIDS system that is available to controllers for immediate reference, should the need arise to use the DARC system. ZLA is in compliance with the JO 3120.4.

Issue: Submitters from Honolulu Control Facility (HCF) reported that there are two airlines (MUL (Mokulele) and MKU (Moku) operating in HCF airspace that have very similar sounding call signs and often fly at the same time.

Potential Hazard: Two airlines with nearly identical sounding call signs operating at the same time can lead to confusion, frequency congestion, repeated clearances, missed readbacks/hearbacks and potential incidents or accidents.

Positive: Mokulele has agreed to a call sign change to "Grace".

Issue: Submitters from Salt Lake ARTCC (ZLC) reported that a problem occurs with communication when both sectors 47 and 45 are open. When the pilots are attempting to communicate with the Sector 45 controller and the Sector 47 controller is broadcasting, the Sector 45 controller receives both transmissions.

Potential Hazard: This makes the transmissions received on Sector 45 unintelligible.

Positive: A collaborative effort between Air Traffic and Tech Ops discovered the problem to be associated with a UHF transmitter at the Wilson Creek Remote Communications Air/Ground (RCAG) site. A team of technicians was dispatched and relocated the UHF antenna and performed some additional maintenance at the site. A week of follow-up monitoring provided evidence that the crosstalk problem has been corrected.

Issue: Submitters from Seattle TRACON (S46) reported that S46 has maps for many of their instrument approach procedures. Controllers would like a map for RNAV SIDs, specifically, the BANGR and HAROB SIDs.

Potential Hazard: Controllers can use these maps to judge spacing, use divergence and run a much more efficient departure (and arrival) operation. These maps have been requested previously through the S46 airspace and procedures team to no avail.

Positive: In response to a recently filed ATSAP report, maps 39 and 40 were amended October 22, 2015 to include the fixes BANGR and HAROB.

Issue: Submitters from Seattle TRACON (S46) reported that operations in the Glider Operations area over Tiger Mountain frequently conflict with downwind aircraft in the traffic pattern at Seattle/Boeing Field (SEA/BFI). The Glider Operations area map is not currently depicted on controllers' scopes.

Potential Hazard: These operations by glider and para-glider aircraft have, on numerous occasions, almost collided with carrier and cargo aircraft.

Positive: S46 has added a glider operations area map to the radar scopes and controllers will have a specific area to remain clear of. Pilot groups have been briefed. Letter to Airmen issued.

Issue: Submitters from San Francisco (SFO) ATCT reported that how B-F1-A taxiways are marked on the ground inadequately indicates where to turn to join F1 southbound. The airport placed a 3-panel guidance sign to the right of taxiway B just short of taxiway F1. The center panel shows that the aircraft is on taxiway B, the right panel will show “F1” with a right arrow, and the left panel will show “F1” with a left arrow.

Potential Hazard: Pilot confusion can exist due to lack of positive guidance and cause potential conflict with other taxiing aircraft. Previous signage was confusing.

Positive: Signage changed and updated.

Issue: Submitters from Stockton ATCT (SCK) reported having questions involving same runway separation (SRS) categories. The question is based on the definitions of SRS Category 1, 2, and 3. The 7110.65 defines Categories in 3-9-6 and the appendix lists aircraft with their weight class and SRS category based on the definitions in 3-9-6. The question is what category is a Beech Super King Air 200? In the 7110.65 it is listed as a CAT 3; in the 7340.2 contractions manual it is listed as a CAT 2. The aircraft is twin propeller driven and its maximum takeoff weight is listed exactly at 12,500 pounds.

Potential hazard: Conflicting manuals lead to confusion as to which type of runway separation is to be applied between a BE200 and other types of aircraft.

Positive: FAA Order JO 7360.1, Aircraft Type Designators, is now considered the authority for aircraft information issues, and correctly shows that the BEECH 200 Super King Air (BE20) is now SRS Category III.

Issue: Submitters from Metropolitan Oakland International Airport ATCT (OAK) reported that since the quiet hours have been extended, there is confusion as to which departure frequency to issue and who to call for release for the SALAD3 departure.

Potential Hazard: There are no provisions in place to know when GROVE opens in the morning out of the mid configuration. Also, the departure plate states departure frequency is 120.9 which put them on an Area frequency not responsible for separation of those aircraft.

Positive: Northern California TRACON (NCT) and OAK have now revised the LOA change with the SALAD departures being coordinated through the CI-1 position. This LOA change was briefed to the controllers and was effective of 12/10/15.

Issue: National Association of Government Employees (NAGE) submitters reported that the Washington ARTCC (ZDC) practice of substituting one airport’s altimeter for another airport altimeter is not a proper solution and is a safety violation. There are approach plate directions at airports on what is a viable altimeter alternative, and what additional heights in the approach needs to be added or taken into account. If the approach plate does not publish an alternative, then no substitute is available.

Potential Hazard: Random insertion of another airport’s altimeter into a weather sequence is potentially false and inaccurate information and could lead to an accident.

Positive: ZDC has created and implemented negotiated procedures to address the altimeter issues. These procedures will be added to the revised SOP and all FDCS have been trained.

Note: NAS-wide NAGE ATSAP reports are reviewed by the WSC ERC.

Issue: Submitters from Nashville International Airport ATCT (BNA) reported that the card readers that allow access to the BNA ATCT gates and doors were frequently inoperative. Several instances had been reported where controllers were unable to get into the parking lot and/or into the building. Some failures lasted for several days with a temporary mitigation to prop open doors/gates.

Potential Hazard: Risk to the NAS is increased when controllers are incapable of being provided relief. Inoperative BNA ATCT card readers had resulted in times when relieving controllers were unable to get into the building--with one event causing the tower to be unmanned for a portion of a mid-shift. Risk to controllers is increased when gates and doors are propped open with no security personnel on-site, allowing unauthorized access to anyone who may choose to just walk in.

Positive: A site survey was conducted and the card reader system was repaired.

Issue: Submitters from Charleston Air Force Base/International ATCT (CHS) reported that the junction of TWY A, TWY F, and RWY 15/33 at the Charleston, SC Airport was confusing to pilots. An example of the confusion was pilots landing RWY 03 had difficulty understanding the turn onto TWY A because of the hold line for RWY 33.

Potential Hazard: TWY/RWY confusion could lead to a collision, runway incursion, or other surface incident.

Positive: A "hot spot" is a location on an airport with a history or potential risk of a surface incident and where heightened attention by pilots is necessary. The intersection of TWY A, TWY F, and RWY 15/33 was published as a "hot spot" on the CHS airport diagram contained in the Terminal Procedures Publication SE.

Issue: ATSAP received reports of crews with a specific airline routinely failing to acknowledge New York ARTCC (ZNY) clearances issued via Controller-Pilot Data Link Communication (CPDLC).

Potential Hazard: An unacknowledged CPDLC clearance immensely increases controller workload and blocks out airspace and altitudes for other aircraft. Other Air Carriers that request climb or descent via CPDLC acknowledge the clearance within a minute or two after sending the clearance. Not acknowledging the clearance prevents other aircraft that might be encountering turbulence, from using those altitudes.

Positive: An ATSAP Advisory Team (AAT) member was able to contact the airline's Chief Pilot and share a redacted ZNY ATSAP Report highlighting the issue. As a direct result of contact and report sharing, the airline's Flight Standards division opened an investigation that found possible uplink failures on their B767 aircraft. The airline developed and implemented a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to include a crew briefing for pilots, and initiated a more detailed investigation into the possible equipment failures.

Issue: Submitters from Atlanta ARTCC (ZTL) reported that a popular website for flight planning and filing erroneously listed Atlanta Center frequency 128.1 as "Clearance Delivery" for the Daniel Airport (KDNL) in Augusta, GA.

Potential Hazard: The erroneous information caused unnecessary frequency congestion, pilot confusion, and controller distraction which focused attention away from other job-related tasks.

Positive: The information in the ATSAP Report was forwarded to the owner of the website. The website was corrected to show AGS Approach frequency 126.8 as the Clearance Delivery frequency with a note stating "APCH/DEP SVC PRVDD BY ATLANTA ARTCC ON FREQS 128.1/322.325 (AUGUSTA RCAG) WHEN AUGUSTA APCH CTL CLSD."

Issue: Submitters from Pittsburgh Approach (PIT) reported an issue with bleed-over on the Butler County Airport (BPT) Remote Communication Frequency (RCO). The bleed-over was coming from a Potomac Consolidated TRACON (PCT) frequency.

Potential Hazard: Nuisance transmissions can block out necessary transmissions and cause distractions.

Positive: The bleed-over issue was elevated through PIT Tech Ops to the ESA Spectrum Engineering Team. The BPT RCO Frequency was replaced with another frequency, mitigating the bleed-over.

Issue: Submitters from New York ARTCC (ZNY) reported that a certain Specialty Area in ZNY provides approach control services to numerous airports on the midnight shift. The controllers in the Area had not received Approach Control Refresher Training since 2008, though the Training Order specified that the Area shall receive Approach Control Refresher Training every year. Much of the region that the controllers provide Approach Control Services to is non-radar; many of the approaches, missed approach procedures, and departure procedures conflict with each other. There was a lack of accurate depiction of “non-radar” conflicts of those approaches and departures of the various airports within the control responsibility of the Area.

Potential Hazard: The lack of proper training on the approach and departure procedures and conflicts increases the risk that a Loss of Separation (LoSS) could occur.

Positive: The ZNY Training Department developed and conducted a refresher training course for the Area that consisted of classroom and simulation problems.

Issue: Submitters from John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) ATCT reported that the lights on the ramp at the new Jet Blue International Terminal at JFK Airport were extremely bright and pointed at the JFK ATCT making it very difficult for controllers to see areas of some taxiways and runways.

Potential Hazard: The lack of controllers having suitable visibility of taxiways and runways could result in a runway incursion or other surface incident.

Positive: The terminal lights were adjusted and are no longer shining into the tower.

Issue: ATSAP data indicates that the South Bend ATCT/TRACON (SBN) radar had several potential safety issues such as numerous false targets, strobing, lengthy losses of radar targets in areas of known radar coverage, complete loss of primary targets, primary and secondary radar outages, and blind spots causing intermittent loss of coverage during critical phases of flight.

Potential Hazard: The unpredictability of the reported issues created a potential hazard, in that air traffic controllers were frequently unable to correctly identify and track aircraft.

Positive: Although the facility and local Tech Ops personnel worked diligently to identify the cause(s) of the multiple radar presentation issues, all corrections were temporary and the system performance continued to degrade. In the Corrective Action Request (CAR), the ERC recommended that the resources and expertise necessary to correctly identify the root cause of the issues be provided in order to successfully correct the problem. In October 2015, the SBN facility leadership confirmed that all radar issues cited in the CAR had been resolved to their satisfaction.

Issue: The Prearranged Coordination Procedures (P-ACP) for Dallas Fort Worth TRACON (D10) departures allows Fort Worth ARTCC (ZFW) low altitude departure sectors to utilize portions of adjacent airspace, via an agreed upon non-verbal point-out process. An ATSAP report from a

controller at ZFW indicated the P-ACP information published in the ZFW SOP had become outdated and no longer reflected current Area configuration or practices.

Potential Hazard: Conflicts between written procedures and unwritten practices can cause confusion and lead to errors.

Positive: As part of the ATSAP InfoShare process, the facility leadership discussed the issue and agreed that the SOP required revisions. ZFW LSC worked the issue and through collaboration and coordination the Area Reps and the Airspace/Procedures office established new P-ACP. The facility issued a NOTICE for the new P-ACP to be added to the SOP at the end of a successful 60-day test period and subsequent re-evaluation. The SOP was updated with the new P-ACP December 10, 2015.

Issue: An ATSAP report indicated that when Albuquerque ATCT (ABQ) is utilizing a northeast flow, conventional standard instrument departure procedures are in use. One of the preferential departure procedures (PDR) applied for flights off of ABQ for the BRAZO intersection toward Denver (+ABQ2 ABQ BRAZO+) required an "APREQ" with Albuquerque Center (ZAB) for each aircraft filed over that route.

Potential Hazard: This PDR increased controller workload and duty related distractions for both ABQ Radar and ZAB controllers.

Positive: As part of the ATSAP InfoShare process, a meeting was held between ABQ and ZAB to discuss the automation/programming issue and all agreed the route needed to be changed. The safety issue has been successfully mitigated by the implemented change.

Issue: An ATSAP report from a Dallas Fort Worth ATCT (DFW) controller pointed out that the Center Control Tower at DFW was being used more frequently. The report indicated that the majority of the controller workforce had never been trained on Center Control Tower operations and was unfamiliar with the equipment layout.

Potential Hazard: Being unfamiliar with the Center Control Tower Operations can lead to confusion, delays in coordination, and increases controller workload.

Positive: The DFW training program was under review and as a result of the ATSAP InfoShare process, DFW facility leadership requested the individuals reviewing the training program to develop a Center Control Tower training plan. A plan was developed which includes a hands-on review of Center Control Tower equipment and the opening/closing procedures. The DFW training order was updated 12/18/15 to include "OPEN/CLOSE CATCT & Equipment Review" as a topic for annual refresher training.

Issue: Submitters from Lafayette ATCT (LFT) reported that the LOA between LFT tower and Lafayette Airport Commission (LAC) included non-traditional vehicle call signs for the LAC vehicles operating on the airport. Several vehicle call signs were similar to those of aircraft operating in the NAS at or near LFT (i.e., VOODOO and Mustang).

Potential Hazard: Non-standard vehicle call signs, especially those similar to aircraft call signs, can lead to confusion, communication errors, and runway incursions.

Positive: As part of the ATSAP InfoShare process, the facility leadership advised the CSA ERC that the LAC was under new management and a future meeting was planned to discuss the current LOA and vehicle call signs. At that time, a date for the meeting had not been set. As a result of filed ATSAP reports, the facility manager reached out to the LAC in order to expedite a resolution of the vehicle call sign safety issue. A new and more traditional/professional vehicle call sign roster was implemented October 1, 2015.

Issue: An ATSAP report submitted by a controller from Flint Tower (FNT) indicated a safety issue with the facility opening procedures. The procedures were very cumbersome when only one person was scheduled to open. The reporter indicated a quick reference checklist and scripts would be useful in lieu of looking the information up in various directives to issue a NOTAM, make several required phone calls, record the ATIS, and enter FAA Form 7230-4 entry in CEDAR.

Potential Hazard: Lack of a checklist and quick material adds to potential duty related distractions during single-controller coverage.

Positive: As part of the ATSAP InfoShare process, the facility leadership convened an Article 48 workgroup to address the cited safety issue. The workgroup suggested and the facility manager subsequently implemented several initiatives to streamline the opening procedures during single-controller staffing including a new checklist, standard “canned” entry for the FAA Form 7230-4 entry, and a quick reference script for the ATIS recording at the position.

Issue: An ATSAP report submitted by a controller from Flint Tower (FNT) reported that the 3-letter identifier for helicopter landing areas published in the facility SOP was different from what was currently used by controllers at the facility.

Potential Hazard: Conflicting information can lead to confusion and errors.

Positive: Through the ATSAP InfoShare process, the facility leadership became aware of the problem. A local panel was convened to address changes to the SOP and the agreed-upon changes were implemented via FNT N7210.73 effective 12/17/15.

Issue: ATSAP reports from Grand Rapids Tower (GRR) indicated that the keys on the keyboard for data entry at the Tower Radar Display (TRD) position in the tower stick and the keyboard needed to be replaced.

Potential Hazard: A malfunctioning keyboard adds to the workload and duty related distractions decreasing safety at the operational position.

Positive: As part of the ATSAP InfoShare process, facility leadership reports that the keyboard has been replaced and that Tech Ops is pursuing new upgraded D-BRITE keyboards for the facility.