



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: May 3, 2024
To: All Air Traffic Organization Managers and Employees
From: Timothy L. Arel, Chief Operating Officer, Air Traffic Organization
Subject: Controller Rest Periods

In December 2023, a small group of independent, objective experts evaluated the latest science on human sleep needs and fatigue considerations as applied to FAA’s current air traffic controller workforce, work requirements, and scheduling practices. The final report, entitled *Assessing Fatigue in the FAA Air Traffic Operations* raised serious concerns regarding controller schedules and fatigue.

As a result of the report, on April 19, 2024, the Administrator directed the Air Traffic Organization to change FAA Order 7210.3DD within 90 days to “require a controller to have at least a 10-hour break from the time work ends to the start of any shift, except that an employee must have a minimum of 12 consecutive hours off duty preceding the start of a mid-shift”. A formal Article 7 notice of the change was issued to NATCA and is now being placed in abeyance while collaborative discussions regarding the science and implementation opportunities are being held.

It is recognized that negotiated Basic Watch Schedule agreements are in place for this year and you have bid prime time leave, making personal plans, while also gearing up for the busy summer operation. We are currently engaging with NATCA at the national level and facilitating meetings with the Scientific Expert Panel to gain a full understanding of the science behind the report. It is my hope that this engagement will allow an opportunity to have a joint agreement and understanding on new rest periods to allow for joint development of a strategy for implementing for the 2025 Basic Watch Schedule or sooner where feasible.

Unfortunately, the report also identified several violations of the existing requirements contained in FAA Order 7210.3DD. As a reminder, Air traffic control specialists in Terminal and En Route facilities whose primary duties are those directly related to the control and separation of aircraft must meet the following criteria:

1. Do not work more than 10 operational hours in a shift.
2. Hours worked before a shift, whether operational or not, will count as operational hours.

3. All work beyond 10 hours must be nonoperational.
4. Have at least an 8-hour break from the time work ends to the start of any shift, except as follows:

(a) Employees are required to have a minimum of 9 consecutive hours off duty preceding the start of a day shift. For purposes of this paragraph only, a day shift is generally defined as a shift where the majority of hours fall between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

(b) This requirement applies to all shift changes, swaps, and overtime to include scheduled, call-in, and holdover assignments.

5. Have an off-duty period of at least 12 hours following a midnight shift. (A midnight shift is defined as a shift in which the majority of hours are worked between 10:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m.)
6. If an employee is assigned more than two (2) consecutive ten (10) hour midnight shifts, all of the consecutive ten (10) hour midnight shifts require a 2100L (Non flex) start time.
7. Ten (10) hour midnight shifts are limited to no more than four (4) in any six (6) day period.
8. No day shift may immediately precede a ten (10) hour midnight shift.
9. Eight (8) hour midnight shifts may be extended by no more than one (1) hour per single shift.
10. A 0530L start time or later is required when working an eight (8) hour day shift prior to an eight (8) hour midnight shift. Employees may not flex to an earlier start time than 0530L.
11. Do not work more than six shifts without taking a regular day off.
12. Have at least 30 consecutive hours off-duty within each seven-day period.
13. Authorized leave, compensatory time used, and credit hours used are considered hours of work.
14. These criteria apply to shift adjustments, including the exchange of shifts and/or days off and the change of shifts and/or days off.

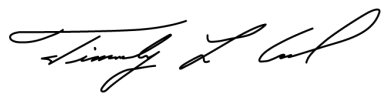
Air Traffic Control Specialists (ATCS) assigned to a position of operation in Flight Service Stations must not:

1. Work more than 6 consecutive days.
2. Work more than a 10-hour day.
3. Have an off-duty period of less than 8 hours between watches.

We must continue to mitigate risk in the National Airspace System. Fatigue is no exception and must be taken seriously. Adherence to the existing requirements is expected as it significantly aids our efforts to mitigate the risks of fatigue and promotes your health and well-being.

I appreciate the work you do every day, keeping our skies safe and training our growing number of new hires. We remain committed to maximum hiring for the next three to five years with an

intention to improve staffing and reduce overtime where possible. This is a collective team effort, I thank NATCA for their collaboration and you for your service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy L Arel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Timothy" and last name "Arel" clearly distinguishable.

Timothy L Arel
Chief Operating Officer
Air Traffic Organization