



Member Update

NATCA UPDATE: GUIDANCE ON OPM EMAILS

NATCA Members,

As the OPM email distraction continues, our guidance remains the same: If the Agency determines that a response is required, a supervisor will assign you sufficient duty time to submit a response. In addition, you should be provided access to a computer that can connect to FAA or personal email and privacy to complete the assignment.

Although we do not support the OPM email distraction, we want to ensure your protection. If your supervisor or other management official assigns you to respond, please refer to the guidance below. We want to assure you that we are continuing to seek confirmation that controllers are excluded from a requirement to respond. As safety professionals, your focus is on ensuring the safe movement of aircraft, not responding to emails.

We have engaged the FAA since the moment we read the Washington Post story about the email to determine whether it is mandatory or voluntary. We have yet to receive an answer.

The email and the FAA's lack of clarity have created avoidable and unnecessary stress and distraction for an overworked and understaffed group of employees who should be focused on safety.

The work you do every day is clearly known to the American public. Each day, the number of operations for each facility and for each hour is tallied and available for review. Every second, every minute, and every hour of your time on position is recorded and available for review. Every word you say is recorded, every keystroke is logged, and every operation is accounted for. Everything you do is scrutinized and analyzed.

That is all aside from the fact that every single day, the time you report to work, your time on position, even the time spent on break, and the time you leave work are electronically recorded. No one else in the federal government is subject to more accountability, oversight, and scrutiny.

Air traffic controllers do not have offices; you have towers and RADAR scopes

to ensure the safety of thousands of aircraft carrying millions of passengers and tons of cargo. You don't have cubicles, desks, government-furnished laptops, or time to respond to emails. What you do have is the safety of every person who flies in our hands twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year.

We will request a comprehensive briefing on the Agency's meaning and intent of the email and reserve our right to negotiate as appropriate.

As we previously stated, please follow the guidance below:

If a manager assigns you to reply to the email, you should be provided sufficient duty time to complete the assignment. If you are not provided sufficient duty time, ensure you request it from the management official and notify your representative if needed. You may use your FAA email or personal email address. We understand you may have concerns with one method or both.

Our expectation is that if FAA managers assign employees to respond to the OPM email, those same managers should provide the employees with access to a computer with the ability to connect to FAA or personal email and privacy to complete the assignment. If you are not offered this, you should request it from management and contact your representative if it does not occur. You do not need to reply to the email when you are off duty, whether on a regular day off or any other type of work absence.

If you are not assigned to respond, you may volunteer to do so, and you should be afforded sufficient duty time to send the email.

Please keep a record of when and for how long you worked to prepare your response. The [templates page](#) contains specific language to use in your email if a response is required or if you choose to respond.

In Solidarity,

Nick Daniels
NATCA President

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