



FAA

Aviation Safety

Memorandum

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To: All Air Carrier Safety Assurance Division Managers
All Air Carrier Safety Assurance Office Managers
THRU: Wes Mooty, Acting Director, Air Carrier Safety Assurance, AFC-001
Jodi L. Baker, Deputy Director, Air Carrier Safety Assurance A, AFC-02A
Dennis J. Hill, Acting Deputy Director, Air Carrier Safety Assurance B, AFC-02B

From: Thomas F. Malone, Manager, Air Transportation Division, AFS-200

Subject: Operational Control Part 121 Air Carriers

Recent developments caused by the national response to COVID-19 to include limiting the size of groups, social distancing, and self-quarantine recommendations have generated discussions concerning the functioning and location of flight dispatch and flight following centers. Various options to address the situation have been proffered with some air carriers implementing procedures to monitor employees, provide greater physical separation between employees or move some dispatchers into the carrier's back-up facility.

The Air Transportation Division, AFS-200, recognizes the concern and heightened energy resulting from this declared emergency situation. Further, we also are aware of many options air carriers or their employees may be considering, such as performing dispatch / flight following duties from a personal residence.

Regulation and guidance presently exist by which the FAA can address these concerns and proposals. The Air Transportation Division believes these existing processes will allow the FAA to best respond to the entirety of the problems presented in a consistent and coherent manner. While weighing the many factors involved and assessing the competing risks, a recognition of the regulatory environment and guidance are essential.

Order 8900.1 Volume 3, Chapter 1, Section 1 contains the general process for approval or acceptance of operator programs. The approval authority is held by the POI who issues OpSpec A008, however depending on the significance of the program change, an approval may require the involvement of an Office Manager or Division Manager. Where deviations to policy are concerned, AFS-200 approval would also be required. It's also important to note that if relief from regulatory requirements is involved an exemption might also be required.

The prime area of concern, and the most significantly different approach, for which this memo is provided is that of a dispatcher / flight follower working from their home. The full scope of this proposal should be understood. While part 121 §§121.107 and 121.125 provide latitude in determining the specific locations of dispatch or flight following centers, and do not specifically prohibit performing this function from a person's home, other factors should also be weighed when making this determination:

First, some of the regulatory requirements: (this is not intended to be a complete list)

- 119.59 - Required Inspections;
- Part 120 - Drug and Alcohol program;
- 121.395 - 121.395 Aircraft dispatcher: Domestic and flag operations
- 121.465 - Aircraft dispatcher duty time limitations
- 121.593 and 121.595 – Dispatching Authority
- 121.599 – Familiarly with Weather Conditions
- 121.601 – Aircraft dispatcher information to pilot in command: Domestic and flag operations.
- 121.628 – Inoperable instruments and equipment.
- 121.629 - Operation in icing conditions.
- 121.631- Original dispatch or flight release, redispach or amendment of dispatch or flight release.
- 121.711 – Communication Records: Domestic and Flag Operations

In addition to the regulatory requirements listed above, the following points should also be considered:

- The Air Carrier must document a comprehensive plan using its approved SRM program, and
- Outline procedures for how operational control will be maintained:
 - Coordination between dispatchers, while flight planning and during flight, with other air carrier units such as maintenance control or other dispatcher support and monitoring;
 - When, where, who and how.
- Describe how operational control will be monitored:
 - FAA oversight at a private residence;
 - Internal air carrier evaluation program at a private residence.
- Identify and provide for equipment and communications needs:
 - Radio Communication, and recording;
 - IT support for computers and communication devices;
 - Band-width of home system;
 - Secure IT connections;
 - Number of monitors necessary for performing a safe and efficient operation;
 - FAX.
- The existence of mitigation plans
 - What is the purpose of dispatching from home?
- How is communication between departments going to be conducted?
 - Company resource management.
- How is accountability handled.
- What controls will be in place.
- Demonstration of the set-up.
- IT support.

- Back-up plans.
- Physical addresses of homes and adequacy of work space.
- Sterile and free from distractions in location,
 - o Restricted access.

Regardless of location, there are numerous issues that will need to be addressed for operational control centers. Air Carriers have established centralized processes for substantive reasons, to break those processes requires equally substantive actions.

The Air Transportation Division encourages Safety Assurance offices to utilize these recommendations in evaluating an air carrier's proposal to mitigate risks associated with deviations to traditional Operational Control processes. Air carriers should also utilize their SMS risk analysis process when constructing their proposals.