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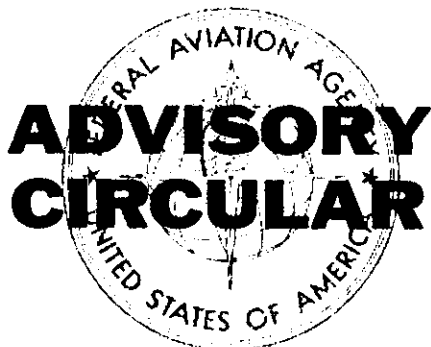
# Federal Aviation Agency

AC NO: 120-26

AIR CARRIER AND  
COMMERCIAL OPERATORS  
AND HELICOPTERS

EFFECTIVE :

1/25/68



**SUBJECT :** CIVIL AIRCRAFT OPERATOR DESIGNATORS

1. PURPOSE. This Advisory Circular states the criteria and the procedures for the assignment of a designator and a corresponding air/ground call-sign to civil aircraft operators engaged in domestic services on a repetitive basis.
2. GENERAL.
  - a. An aircraft operator designator is a two or three-letter code which, when used in conjunction with the flight number, serves as the aircraft identification in the air traffic control system in flight plans, fix postings, control messages, computers, etc. When assigned, the designator/flight number combination is used in lieu of the aircraft's registration (N) number in these written records.
  - b. A radiotelephone designator (air/ground call-sign) is normally the company name or an abbreviation thereof used in combination with the flight number. It is assigned at the same time as the three-letter code and becomes the aircraft identification in air/ground communications with FAA facilities in lieu of the standard "type/tail number" combination.
  - c. Two-letter designators, e.g., TW, AA, BN, are now assigned by ICAO on a world-wide, exclusive basis for international operations. Such designators are not available to purely domestic operators.
  - d. The FAA has established a system for the assignment of aircraft operator designators in the three-letter series (with corresponding air/ground call-signs) to supplement the ICAO international system. The FAA system is designed to aid air traffic personnel in the handling of aircraft operating frequently between specified points, including increased utilization of the Stored Flight Plan Program.

**3. CRITERIA.**


- a. An aircraft operator will be considered for assignment of a three-letter designator and an air/ground call-sign by the Air Traffic Service provided:
- (1) The assignment will promote the efficiency of the control or supervision of the operation by FAA;
  - (2) The operator is not eligible for an ICAO two-letter designator;
  - (3) The company is certificated for commercial operations under FAR 135, 121, or 127;
  - (4) Flight operations are conducted on a scheduled basis between the same points at least one day each week within the United States Air Traffic Control System on a continuous (not seasonal) basis.
- b. Exceptions to Item (3) may be made on an individual basis if the operation is noncommercial but otherwise meets the criteria.
- c. Flight test operations and other operations of special concern to FAA will be considered on an individual basis.

4. **APPLICATION.** An aircraft operator that meets the above criteria and desires assignment of a designator and air/ground call-sign for air traffic control purposes may address a request to the appropriate FAA Regional Office, Attention: Air Traffic Division, or FAA Area Office, Attention: Air Traffic Branch. The request should contain information concerning how the operator meets the criteria including copies of any published schedules. An air/ground call-sign may be suggested by the applicant. These are normally the company name or a contraction thereof.
5. **TRANSITION TO THE NEW SYSTEM.** Because of the obsolescence of the present list of designators, the next revision to the FAA Contractions Handbook (7340.1) (available from the Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 20402, for sixty cents) will list only those designators (with air/ground call-signs) which are either (a) currently assigned by ICAO (two-letters) or (b) have been authorized by the Air Traffic Service, FAA, by memorandum to the operator since August 1, 1966 (three-letters). However, in order to provide ample time for application under this new program, Air Traffic facilities are being instructed to continue to accept those designators previously listed and still in use, until June 30, 1968. Thereafter, only those authorized by ICAO or the Air Traffic Service, FAA, will be valid.

6. ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES. Assignment of a three-letter designator and an air/ground call-sign will be made by FAA Headquarters, Air Traffic Service, by memorandum to the company pending publication in the Contractions Handbook. If possible, assignment of the air/ground call-sign will be made in accordance with the one suggested. New call-signs which are similar in sound to those of other established air carriers using the same routes or terminals will not be assigned in order to reduce the possibility of misidentification in air traffic control operations. In such instances, two words or a contraction of the company name may be necessary.

7. LIMITATIONS.

- a. The assignment of a three-letter designator and an air/ground call-sign (instead of the aircraft registration number or type/number) is similar to the procedure for identification of the scheduled airlines. The use of both is necessary for the controller's correlation between the written records and radiocommunications. However, they are valid only when the aircraft are being flown on regular company business, i.e., in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Aviation Regulation under which an operating certificate was obtained from the FAA. When using the aircraft for personal flying, for example, the pilot must revert to standard identification procedures (type/tail number).
- b. Use of an assigned three-letter designator and corresponding air/ground call-sign is valid only within the United States Air Traffic Control System. Standard identification procedures are required for the entire flight if any portion is not subject to U. S. air traffic control.
- c. An operator assigned an aircraft company designator and an air/ground call-sign does not automatically qualify for entrance into the Stored Flight Plan Program of the Air Route Traffic Control Centers. The Stored Flight Plan Program has requirements in addition to those specified in the criteria for an aircraft company designator and an air/ground call-sign. Contact the appropriate ARTCC for information concerning stored flight plans.



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