

AC NO: 120-26C

DATE: 28 September 1972



# ADVISORY CIRCULAR

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

**SUBJECT:** CIVIL AIRCRAFT OPERATOR DESIGNATORS

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1. PURPOSE. This Advisory Circular revises the criteria and states 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. The criteria has been revised to require operations on a regularly scheduled basis for eligibility of the assignments.
2. CANCELLATION. Advisory Circular No. 120-26B, dated 11 May 1971, is canceled.
3. GENERAL.
  - a. An aircraft operator designator is a 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 a 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. This system is designed primarily to aid air traffic personnel in the handling of aircraft operating frequently between specified points, including increased utilization of the Stored Flight Plan Program.

NOTE: Two-letter designators, e.g., TW, AA, BN, are assigned by ICAO on a world-wide, exclusive basis for international operations. Such designators are not available to purely domestic operators.

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4. 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 does not hold an ICAO two-letter code and is not eligible for such an assignment;
  - (3) The company is certificated for commercial operations under Federal Aviation Regulations and:
    - (a) flight operations are conducted on a regularly scheduled (not seasonal) basis with at least five round trips per week between two or more points; OR,
    - (b) Air Mail is carried under a contract with the U.S. Postal Service.
- b. Exceptions to criteria may be authorized on an individual basis by the Air Traffic Service.

5. 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. The request should contain information concerning how the operator meets the criteria including several copies of his published schedule, the number of the FAA certificate which authorizes commercial operations and the Federal Aviation Regulation under which operations are to be conducted. If an Air Mail contract is pending, the Post Office "Notice of Intent" number is also needed. An air/ground call-sign may be suggested by the applicant. These are normally the company name or a contraction thereof.

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 FAA Contractions Handbook (7340.1). If possible, assignment of the air/ground call-sign will be made in accordance with the one suggested. New call-signs which duplicate or are similar in sound to those of other established air carriers will not be assigned in order to reduce the possibility of misidentification in air traffic control operations. In such instances, two words, a contraction of the company name or a coined phrase may be necessary. Letters are not assigned as a radio call.

7. LIMITATIONS.

- a. The assignment of a three-letter designator and an air/ground call-sign 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. 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. An exception may be authorized to use the assignment outside of the United States when approval is obtained from the country of jurisdiction. The aircraft operator must obtain such approval in writing, in advance of using it in a flight plan. A copy of the approval from the other country must be forwarded to the appropriate FAA Regional Office, Attention: Air Traffic Division. Upon receipt, appropriate facilities will be notified of the authorization to use the assigned designator to a destination in a trans-border flight. Otherwise, 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 for entrance in addition to those specified in the criteria for this program. Contact the appropriate ARTCC for information concerning stored flight plans.
- d. Assignments may be amended or canceled should there be evidence of misidentification of aircraft in the ATC system with codes assigned to other aircraft operators.



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