

23

TAD-4944

AC NO: 120-26D

DATE: November 11, 1976



# ADVISORY CIRCULAR

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

**SUBJECT:** CIVIL AIRCRAFT OPERATOR DESIGNATORS

1. PURPOSE. This Advisory Circular revises the criteria and states the procedures for the assignment of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), two-letter, and Federal Aviation Administration three-letter aircraft company designators.
2. CANCELLATION. Advisory Circular No. 120-26C, dated September 28, 1972, is canceled.
3. 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 instead 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 two or 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: ICAO two-letter designators, e.g., TW, AA, EA, are assigned on a world-wide, exclusive basis for international operations. Such designators are not available to purely domestic operators.

#### 4. CRITERIA.

- a. A two-letter designator is registered only for aircraft operating agencies and other aircraft serving companies which, in the opinion of the State of jurisdiction, have a need for an exclusive designator. Also, two-letter ICAO designators shall only be assigned when it is deemed advantageous to U.S. Air Traffic Control. They will not be assigned to eliminate problems that can be eliminated by changing registration number identifications or similar sounding company names.
  - (1) Connection to the Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network is a requirement established by ICAO, (Document 8585).
  - (2) Within the United States, the AFTN is that portion of the Aeronautical Fixed Service (AFS), identified as the AFTN and is a telecommunications service between specified fixed points provided primarily for the safety of air navigation and for the regular efficient and economical operation of air services.
  - (3) AFTN connections are authorized only for aircraft operating and serving agencies to introduce aircraft movement data into the air navigation system and the exchange of permissible traffic in accordance with ICAO Annex 10 and FAR Part 189.
  - (4) In order to determine eligibility for an AFTN connection, the following information is required:
    - (a) Type of aircraft operation or service.
    - (b) Intended use of AFTN.
    - (c) Number and type of messages to be handled on a daily basis.
    - (d) A statement that the operator understands that charges will be assessed for Class B message traffic (when permissible in accordance with ICAO Annex 10 and FAR Part 189) and agreeable to executing an agreement with FAA and depositing funds in accordance with FAA regulations.

(e) Location and identification of distant correspondents.

b. 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 certified 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.

c. 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 for an ICAO two-letter assignment should forward the request directly to the Federal Aviation Administration, Air Traffic Service, Flight Services Division, AAT-400, Washington, D. C. 20591, for review.

An aircraft operator that meets the above criteria for a three-letter code 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 U.S. Postal Service Contract 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. Assignments of ICAO two-letter designators and FAA Three-letter Civil Aircraft Company Designators 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 radio communications. 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 Regulations 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 transborder 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.

  
RAYMOND G. BELANGER  
Director, Air Traffic Service