

Cancelled by 26-F

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# ADVISORY CIRCULAR



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D.C.

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**Subject:** DESIGNATORS FOR AIRCRAFT OPERATING AGENCIES, AERONAUTICAL  
AUTHORITIES AND SERVICES

1. PURPOSE. This Advisory Circular states the criteria for eligibility and procedures for requesting the assignment of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) three-letter aircraft operator designators and telephony designators; and for International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) two-letter designators and telephony designators for aircraft operating agencies, aeronautical authorities and services.

\* Information about the reciprocal arrangements for using FAA three-letter aircraft operator designators and telephony designators for transborder flights between Canada and the United States is also included. \*

2. CANCELLATION. Advisory Circular No. 120-26D dated 11/11/76 is cancelled.

\* 3. RELATED READING MATERIAL. Additional information on this subject may be found in: FAA Handbook 7340.1F (Contractions); ICAO Document 8585 (Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities and Services); Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR), Part 189 (Use of FAA Communications System); and ICAO, Annex 10, Aeronautical Telecommunications. \*

4. DEFINITIONS.

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 flight plans, fix postings, control messages, computers, etc., in the air traffic control system. When authorized, the designator/flight number combination is used instead of the aircraft registration number/identification.

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Initiated by: AAT-430

(1) "Two-letter designators" are applicable to ICAO assignments for international record communication purposes and Air Traffic Service (ATS) related functions.

(2) "Three-letter designators" are applicable to FAA - assignments for national record communications and ATS purposes.

b. "Telephony designators" are normally the company name or an abbreviation thereof, used in combination with the flight number. They are assigned at the same time as the operator designator and become the aircraft identification in air/ground communications with air traffic control facilities in lieu of the standard "type/tail number" combination. They are also used for telephone coordination purposes.

\* c. According to ICAO, Annex 10, the "Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFIN)" is an integrated worldwide system of aeronautical fixed circuits providing, as part of the Aeronautical Fixed Service, for the exchange of messages between the aeronautical fixed stations within the network.

"NOTE: 'Integrated' is to be interpreted as a mode of operation necessary to insure that messages can be transmitted from any aeronautical fixed station within the network to any other aeronautical fixed station within the network." \*

#### 5. FAA ASSIGNED THREE-LETTER OPERATOR DESIGNATORS AND TELEPHONY DESIGNATORS.

a. Discussion. The three-letter system of designators is designed primarily to aid air traffic personnel in the handling of aircraft operating frequently between specified points. Telephony designators must be shown in the "Remarks" portion of the flight plan, in addition to the three-letter designators. This is essential so that air traffic controllers can readily correlate the telephony designator with the posted flight plan identification of the aircraft (operator designator code). \*

b. Criteria. An aircraft operator will be granted an assignment of a three-letter designator and telephony designator by the ATS 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 designator and is not eligible for such an assignment.

(3) The company is certified for commercial operations under appropriate FARs.

\* (4) Flight operations are conducted on a regularly scheduled (not seasonal) basis with at least 10 round trips per week between two or more points.

c. How to Apply. An aircraft operator that meets these criteria for a three-letter domestic designator and telephony designator should forward a request to the appropriate FAA Regional Office, Attention: Air Traffic Division. The request should contain the following information:

(1) Name and address of company.

(2) Three copies of the company's published schedule, if any, or a list of points served, routes flown and frequency of flights.

(3) The number and date of the FAA certification (and Canadian, if applicable) which authorizes commercial operations.

(4) The FARs (Ministry of Transport Regulations, if applicable) under which the operations are to be conducted.

(5) Several suggested telephony designators, if desired. These are normally the company name or a coined version thereof.

d. Assignment Procedures.

(1) Assignments of FAA three-letter civil aircraft operator designators and telephony designators will be made by FAA Headquarters, ATS, by memorandum to the operator pending publication in the FAA Contractions Handbook (7340.1). When possible, these assignments will be made in accordance with those suggested. To minimize the misidentification in air traffic control operations, duplicate or similar sounding telephony designators will not be assigned.

(2) Previously, use of assigned three-letter designators and corresponding telephony designators was valid only within the United States Air Traffic Control System. By recent agreement with the Ministry of Transportation, Canada, the three-letter operator and telephony designators system is now available for both countries' use on transborder flights into either the United States or Canadian Airspace.

e. Limitations.

(1) These assignments are valid only when the aircraft is being flown on company business and in accordance with the provisions of the FARs under which an operating certificate was obtained from FAA.

(2) When using the aircraft for personal flying or nonbusiness flights, the pilot must revert to standard identification procedures (type/tail number).

(3) If an aircraft operator changes the company name or forms a subsidiary corporation under the parent organization, the originally assigned telephony designator and operator designator will remain in effect unless the operations certificate is surrendered and a new organization is established. \*

(4) Assignments shall be amended or cancelled should there be confusion or misidentification of an aircraft resulting from similar sounding telephony designators in the air traffic control system.

6. ICAO TWO-LETTER DESIGNATORS AND TELEPHONY DESIGNATORS.

a. Discussion. ICAO two-letter designators and telephony designators are assigned on a worldwide basis to an aircraft operating or serving company for international operations. ICAO two-letter company designators are assigned primarily for use on the international telecommunications service when it is deemed advantageous for air traffic control purposes and are not available to purely domestic operators. As stated in ICAO Document 8585, telephony designators "should be pronounceable and suitable phonetically in at least one of the following languages: English, French, or Spanish. Such telephony designators should, preferably, resemble the name of the aircraft operating authority or service."

b. Criteria. To be considered for an ICAO two-letter designator, an aircraft operating or servicing company must:

(1) Be engaged in operations between the United States and international points on a regular basis, or

(2) Provide service to aircraft covered under (1) above on a regular basis.

"NOTE: The requirement for exchange of international message traffic via the AFTN is a consideration."

c. How to Apply. Requests for the assignment of ICAO designators should be addressed to: FAA, Air Traffic Service, Flight Services Division, AAT-400, Washington, D.C. 20591. The following information, as appropriate, is required:

(1) Name and address of company.

(2) Type of aircraft operation or service provided. In the case of service, a list of those operators served.

(4) Number of the FAA certificate which authorizes the company's commercial operations.

(5) The part of the FAR under which operations are to be conducted.



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