



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Advisory Circular

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**Subject: INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION
ORGANIZATION DESIGNATORS/RADIO
TELEPHONY ASSIGNMENTS FOR
AIRCRAFT OPERATING AGENCIES,
AERONAUTICAL AUTHORITIES, AND
SERVICES**

**Date: 10/1/87
Initiated by: ATO-210**

AC No.: 120-26G

1. **PURPOSE.** This Advisory Circular states the criteria for eligibility and procedures for requesting the assignment of an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) three-letter designator and telephony designator for agencies, aeronautical authorities, and services.

2. **CANCELLATION.** Advisory Circular No. 120-26F dated 4/1/80 is cancelled.

3. **RELATED READING MATERIAL.** Additional information on the subject may be found in FAA Handbook, 7340.1, Contractions; International Civil Aviation Organization Document 8585, Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities, and Services.

4. DEFINITIONS.

a. This section identifies the criteria for eligibility and procedures for requesting the assignment of an ICAO three-letter aircraft-company designator and radio-telephony for aircraft operating agencies, aeronautical authorities, and services.

b. An aircraft-company 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 authorized, the designator/flight number combination is used instead of the aircraft registration number, (N number). Three-letter designators are applicable to ICAO assignments for international and national record communication purposes and Air Traffic Operations Service related functions.

c. A radio-telephony (air/ground call) 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 company designator and becomes the aircraft identification in air/ground communications with air traffic control facilities in lieu of the standard "type/tail number" combination. It is also used for telephone coordination purposes.

5. CRITERIA.

a. A three-letter designator is registered only for those aircraft operating agencies and other aircraft serving companies which, in the opinion of the State of jurisdiction, have a need for an exclusive designator. They are assigned on a worldwide basis to an aircraft operating or serving company for commercial and international operations. ICAO three-letter company designators may be used on the international telecommunications service when deemed advantageous for air traffic control purposes.

b. 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." The telephony designator should consist of not more than two words and a total of three syllables.

c. Aircraft operating agencies which operate 10 or more scheduled international air operations per week (not seasonal) and generate the appropriate flight plans and other related flight operations over the Aeronautical

Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN) or, 20 or more scheduled domestic round trip air operations per week are eligible for a three-letter designator.

d. Connection to the AFTN is a requirement established by ICAO Document 8585. According to ICAO, Annex 10, the AFTN is an integrated worldwide system of aeronautical fixed circuits providing, as part of the Aeronautical Fixed Service (AFS), for the exchange of messages between the aeronautical fixed stations within the network. '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.

(1) The AFTN is a telecommunication service between specified fixed points. It is provided for the transmission of international flight plans, for the safety of air navigation and for the regular, efficient and economical operation of air services.

(2) 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 Federal Air Regulations (FAR) Part 189.

6. REQUEST.

a. Requests for three-letter ICAO designators shall be addressed to the appropriate FAA Regional Office Air Traffic Division.

b. Regions shall review and determine whether a suggested radio-telephony is sufficiently different phonetically from the authorized radio-telephonies of other operators, and determine if the proper documentation is being submitted before sending their recommendation to ATO-210. Letters are not assigned as a radio-telephony.

c. The assignment of three-letter designators and air/ground radio-telephonies are made by ICAO on a world-wide basis for domestic and international operations and use in the AFTN.

7. DOCUMENTATION. In order to determine eligibility for an ICAO designator and radio-telephony, the following information is required:

a. The name and the address of the company.

b. The type of aircraft operation or service provided. In the case of a service, provide a list of the operators served.

c. The intended use of AFTN for international operations.

d. The number and the type of messages to be handled on a daily basis.

e. The location and the identification of distant correspondents.

f. Three copies of the company/operator published flight schedules.

g. A copy of the FAA Certificate which authorizes the company's operations.

h. The FAR Part under which operations are to be conducted.

i. Several suggested three-letter designators and radio-telephony calls if desired. These are normally the company name or an abbreviation (coined version) thereof.

j. Failure to submit the proper documentation will delay action on the company's request for a designator assignment.

8. BASIS FOR ASSIGNMENT.

a. Three-letter ICAO designators are assigned when it is deemed advantageous to U.S. air traffic control.

b. ICAO designators will not be assigned to eliminate problems that can be solved by changing registration number, or similar sounding company names.

9. CHANGES IN COMPANY STATUS. Operators are required to notify the FAA, Airspace — Rules and Aeronautical Information Division, Flight Information and Obstructions Branch (ATO-210) when they:

a. Suspend or cancel operations for any reason.

b. Change the name, address, or physical location of the company to which a designator and telephony have been assigned.

10. THREE-LETTER AIRCRAFT COMPANY AND TELEPHONY DESIGNATORS.

a. Authorized designators and telephonies are valid only when aircraft are flown on regular published routes for company business; i.e., in accordance with the provisions of the FAR under which an operating certificate was obtained from the FAA. When using the aircraft for personal flying, or off the scheduled routes, the pilot must revert to standard identification procedures (N number).

b. In all cases, the radio-telephonies must be listed in the "Remarks" portion of the flight plans. This requirement is necessary for the air traffic controller's correlation between the written records and radio communications.

c. The Stored Flight Plan Program has requirements for entrance in addition to that specified in the criteria for designators.

d. The FAA, Airspace — Rules and Aeronautical Information Division, Flight Information and Obstructions Branch, ATO-210, reserves the right to amend or cancel designator assignments should there be evidence of misidentification of aircraft in the United States.

NOTE.—FAR Part 91 requires pilots to close ATC flight plans. Failure to do so when using the authorized aircraft-company designator and flight number as the aircraft identification, necessitating Search and Rescue procedures by the FAA, will result in withdrawal of the designator authorization.

11. PUBLICATION OF AIRCRAFT-COMPANY DESIGNATORS AND RADIO-TELEPHONIES. The effective date of ICAO designators and radio-telephonies (air/ground call) will be established to provide adequate lead-time for entry into the Stored Flight Plan Program, and for FAA facilities to be advised of the authorized assignments pending publication in the Contractions Handbook.

12. SPECIAL RADIO CALLS.

a. Special radio calls (for use in lieu of the aircraft registration number with air traffic control facilities) are temporarily authorized only when their assignment will necessitate "special handling" by air traffic control.

b. Special calls may be authorized for the following categories:

- (1) Commemorative flights.
- (2) Large number of aircraft participating in an organized race.
- (3) Aircraft operating during an emergency or disaster condition.

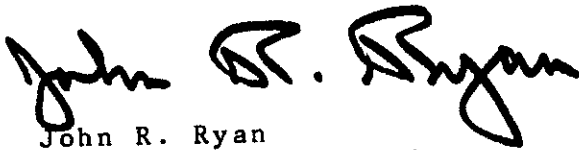
c. Requests shall be made to FAA, Airspace — Rules and Aeronautical Information Division, Flight Information and Obstructions Branch, ATO-210. The following must be submitted with the request:

- (1) The type of flight.
- (2) The handling required.
- (3) The type and the number of aircraft.
- (4) The routes and the duration of operation.

d. After approval is granted, the Flight Information and Obstructions Branch will notify the Federal Communications Commission.

13. LOCAL RADIO CALLS.

- a. Local radio calls shall be used only for communications between the local tower, and for local VFR operations. They shall not be for use in filing flight plans.
- b. Local call-signs are approved in accordance with the FAA Facility Operation and Administration Handbook, 7210.3, and the Federal Communications Commission Regulation 87.115.
- c. Request for local call-signs shall be reviewed by the Regional Air Traffic Division for adherence to criteria, then forwarded to FAA, Airspace — Rules and Aeronautical Information Division, Flight Information and Obstructions Branch, ATO-210, with recommendations.



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