



U.S. Department  
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# FAA World

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## Institutionalizing IMPACT 88

By Edward J. Lynch

Allan McArtor arrived at FAA with the concept of IMPACT 88 already firmly planted in his mind. He believed the public was losing faith in the safety and integrity of the aviation system, and he needed to take bold and decisive action to restore that confidence.

Even before he took his oath of office from former Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole in a public ceremony on July 27, he was soliciting suggestions from the agency's associate administrators and other top aides on special-emphasis programs that could yield a quick return (for the agency's investment of time and money) during his term.

The bare bones of IMPACT 88 were revealed to those attending the swearing-in ceremony in a speech to FAA employees that showed McArtor had no intention of being a "caretaker" Administrator. He talked about the need to improve pilot training, increase airline accountability, expand airport and air-space capacity, streamline FAA's internal processes and increase professionalism and pride in the agency workforce.

The name IMPACT 88 came a bit later and underscored the new Administrator's determination to achieve results in the shortest possible time. As he explained to the Aero Club of Washington on September 15, "I wanted a program

name that reflected the intensity and commitment that I have for making a positive impact in FY 88."

While still settling into the Administrator's suite, McArtor asked his chief of staff, Michael Goldfarb, to assemble a team of agency employees who would refine the various elements of "IMPACT 88" and formulate a coherent program.

That team was comprised of Joan Bauerlein from the Budget Office, Dan Beaudette from Flight Standards, Darlene Freeman from the Eastern Region, Jack Loewenstein from Systems Engineering, Walt Mitchell from Air

Traffic and Ann Tucker from Management Systems.

Operating out of a cluttered conference room on the 10th floor of Washington headquarters from early August to mid-October, team members interviewed program officials representing all of the major program areas and also went outside the agency to solicit industry views. Team meetings were held regularly to discuss progress, and McArtor, Goldfarb and other key aides were kept constantly informed to obtain their feedback.

Although many of the planks eventually hammered onto the IMPACT 88 platform developed from current FAA programs, McArtor wanted to put his own stamp on each board. This required new emphases in some programs, changes of direction in others and general acceleration of all of these efforts.

As the "IMPACT 88" program was getting started, its importance was underscored by the crash of Northwest Airlines Flight 255 in Detroit on Aug. 16. Initial reports of the flight crew's failure to deploy flaps during takeoff added credibility to McArtor's call—first announced in his July 27 speech—for a "top to bottom review of pilot training" and a new emphasis on cockpit resource management.

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*Mr. Lynch is a special assistant in the Office of Public Affairs now on assignment to a Presidential commission. He has published numerous articles and book reviews on public policy issues.*



Santa is checked out on a position at the Boston ARTCC by Ken Baret and Fred Lane (right) so he can plan vectors to expedite his deliveries.

*Boston Herald photo*

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# Pilot's Safety Role Eroded by Court Decisions

By Andrew J. Dilk

**F**AA's historic "pilot-in-command" (PIC) regulatory concept has been seriously eroded in recent years by court decisions that increasingly have shifted the responsibility for flight safety to air traffic controllers.

The basic premise of the current aviation system is that pilots are trained, tested and certified to comply with agency regulations and, therefore, must be held accountable for the safe operation of their aircraft. Controllers must assume that pilots are qualified, that their preflight planning was adequate, that their aircraft is suitably equipped and that they are fully capable of complying with any clearance they request.

However, there is strong evidence that the public does not understand or appreciate this concept. It seeks "guarantees" that accidents won't occur and, when they do, it looks with confused disfavor on the performance of the FAA when, in fact, the vast majority of accidents are the fault of the pilot-in-command.

Accordingly, the FAA is an increasingly popular target of litigation resulting from air traffic accidents, with the plaintiffs alleging that air traffic controllers and/or other agency employees either caused the accident in question or didn't do enough to prevent it. As a result, there are currently outstanding over \$41 billion in grossly inflated claims filed against the agency. During fiscal years 1981-1985, an average of 338 claims were filed annually for death or injuries sustained in aircraft accidents.

All too often, plaintiffs have found a sympathetic ear among judges and juries who have little or no understanding of aviation or how the air traffic control (ATC) system works. Although the ATC system, like any human endeavor, is necessarily imperfect, it has established an impressive safety record based in large part on the assumption that pilots will comply with all applicable regulatory requirements.

This shift in judicial philosophy is in marked contrast to earlier decisions that acknowledged the individual responsibility of the system users. One rather well-known example of pilot respon-

sibility was the decision of a federal appeals court a decade ago concerning the death of baseball star Roberto Clemente in an aircraft accident in Puerto Rico.

In that case, it was alleged that FAA inspectors and controllers had a responsibility to maintain surveillance on an unrepaired DC-7 leased by the Clemente Relief Committee for airlifting supplies to Nicaraguan earthquake victims, to warn the passengers or somehow to prevent its use. In rejecting recovery against the United States, the court concluded that "the government may not be turned to as a final source of relief from the tragedies of life."

The wisdom of that philosophy is inherent in a traditional sense of personal and private responsibility. Unfortunately, it is too often turned aside by courts and individuals who are searching for "guarantees" of safety in life. This is particularly true when injured parties look to the U.S. Treasury for compensation because the truly responsible party, the pilot, has only limited assets.

Still, as far back as 1967, we can see the erosion of the PIC concept in a federal appeals court decision involving the crash of an Eastern Airlines DC-7 during an approach to New York's JFK airport in marginal weather. At issue was the quality and timeliness of weather information provided to the pilot.

The court chose to ignore the applicable provisions of the controllers' operational manual and substitute its "more meaningful and reasonable interpretation." The court acknowledged that "when the crew finally decided to terminate the improper approach, the missed-approach maneuver was performed in a negligent manner."

Yet, the court concluded that the accident might not have happened if the pilot had been advised that visibility had dropped from one mile to three-quarters of a mile.

*The Manager of the Accident Counsel Branch in the Litigation Division of the Office of the Chief Counsel, Mr. Dilk is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law School, a member of the Massachusetts Bar Assn. and a private pilot and has been involved in the trial of some 20 aviation accident cases. This material was taken from his article in the summer 1987 Journal of Air Law and Commerce, published by the Southern Methodist University School of Law.*

A second criticized decision involved a 1971 midair collision in visual flight rules (VFR) weather conditions a mile from the Santa Monica, Calif., airport. One of the involved aircraft entered the traffic pattern unannounced and failed to see and avoid the other. The judge found that ATC was 20 percent at fault because the controllers failed to scan the traffic-entry corridor of the downwind leg of the traffic pattern during the two-minute period immediately preceding the collision.

The judge reasoned that under "especially dangerous conditions," the controller must take steps beyond those set forth in the manual. He referred to the "dangerous realities" of the entry corridor, despite its being a standard procedure utilized thousands of times a day at airports throughout the U.S.

A textbook example of a court's vacant rejection of the PIC concept is found in a 1986 decision absolving the pilot of a Beech 18 air taxi of any negligence in a collision with a television tower.

The pilot, who was conducting an instrument approach to the Gainesville, Fla., airport, had reported to a controller at the non-radar facility that he had reached the "outer marker," an electronic navigation aid located 4.7 miles from the runway. He was cleared to land, but two minutes and 45 seconds later reported that he was executing a missed approach. Thirty-two seconds later he advised, "got an engine out" and within 15 seconds was again cleared to land.

Contrary to the missed-approach procedure on his chart, which required a left turn, he continued straight flight for seven miles, striking the wire of a television tower depicted on his chart, killing himself and his two passengers. The court reasoned that the controller "knew" that the aircraft was in the "general vicinity" of the tower and yet had failed to give the pilot any warning.

Jacksonville Center radar data subsequently revealed that the pilot had mistakenly reported reaching the wrong



The author (right) discusses with Donald K. Fama, manager of the Flight Procedures Standards Branch, Office of Flight Standards, the LDA-A approach procedures and minimum descent altitude to a Colorado airport following an incident there.

Photo by Ed Cason

navigation aid and was really four miles closer to the television tower than the controller could have known. Making the decision all the more egregious was the rejection by both the trial court and the appeals court as "not material to the cause of the crash" the fact that the pilot of this air taxi was required to have either a co-pilot or an autopilot to assist him but had neither.

The most recent example of a capricious reversal of traditional pilot-controller roles was a 1986 decision by a Los Angeles federal district court, pres-

ently on appeal. In that accident-related case, the pilot initially had been given vectors to certain magnetic headings to expedite his instrument approach to the Santa Barbara airport. Then, the pilot was "cleared" to intercept a particular navigational aid (VOR) signal for the final approach course to landing.

When reaching that point, the pilot was required to turn inbound on the signal and to descend to the runway according to the approach-chart procedures. On radar, the controller observed the aircraft target turn inbound and subsequently disappear off the scope as it descended below radar coverage.

He later learned that the aircraft had not landed but had crashed into mountains while flying in the opposite direction. The court chose not to believe the controller and concluded that the pilot never turned inbound, ruling that his percentage of negligence was only 40%, while that of the controller was 60% for his failure to warn the pilot.

Even if one could accept the court's facts, it stretches the imagination to acknowledge that the degree of negligence of a pilot who fails to comply with his primary regulatory responsibility can be less than that of a controller who fails to warn the pilot of the emergency the pilot has himself created.

The debilitating effect of these decisions on the FAA in effectuating its regulatory PIC concept is coupled with what seems to be a growing judicial and public misunderstanding of the regulatory system. Contrary to such views, the minuscule involvement of air traffic control

in aircraft accidents has not really changed in recent years. It could be expected to remain constant even if staffing were increased tenfold. Although the FAA is assiduously working to prevent any accidents, the harsh reality is that no regulatory body can ever guarantee that each PIC will do what the regulations require.

The cost to the American taxpayer of aviation litigation is increasingly based on largely arbitrary social declarations of judges who have ignored the FAA's regulatory scheme and the reasoning behind rational aviation case law. Forty years of case law following the Federal Tort Claims Act of 1946 simply reflects an unwillingness or inability on the part of a growing number of judges to devote the requisite time to comprehend or apply technically complex aviation tort law.

An amendment to that law creating an administrative adjudicatory body within the FAA would appear to be the most equitable means of resolving aviation claims filed against the FAA, while best protecting the integrity of the FAA's regulatory system and the taxpayer's dollar. ■

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## This Picture Has Class



Photo by Jack Jones

This is not the latest bevy of FAA Academy graduates but third, fourth and fifth graders from Oklahoma City's Horace Mann Elementary School in front of an FAA DC-9 on the Aeronautical Center's flight line. After making several presentations at the school, the Aircraft Maintenance and Engineering Div., Aviation Standards National Field Office, hosted the youngsters at the center as an aviation education project under a joint business/education/government-adopt-a-school program.

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Lloyd E. Lynch  
Edwin L. McDanel  
Edward E. Meyer  
Lynno E. Stephenson  
John A. Stotts  
Raleigh T. Wachsman  
Herbert A. Tompkins

### WESTERN-PACIFIC REGION

Alfred C. Ludwig, Jr.  
William R. Strickland  
George H. Collier  
James L. Cook, Jr.  
Earl D. Hargrave  
Winifred M. Harris  
Richard J. Heam

## A New School for Change

When the Center for Management Development (CMD) was dedicated October 15, it was more than just the opening of a new facility; it was another step in the overall modernization of FAA. We are, as FAA Acting Executive Director Robert Whittington said at the ceremonies, "in the midst of a substantial change in the FAA culture."

Noting that the agency was well on its way toward a complete modernization of the nation's air traffic control system in a \$12 billion, 10-year effort, he said that FAA needs to change the way it manages an organization of over 47,000 people scattered in about 1,800 duty locations. "Along with our new equipment, we need to bring new approaches to the way we manage the people who work for the FAA."

In a comfortable environment designed to foster study, the CMD is expected to provide some of those new approaches to initial and refresher supervisory and managerial training for about 4,000 FAAers in its first year.

Students will be living and studying in a \$7.5 million, 130,000-square-foot facility sitting on 10.5 acres at Palm Coast, near Daytona Beach, Fla. CMD was built and is operated by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University under a 20-year \$47.3 million contract. Instructional services are being provided by University Research Corp. under a five-year \$13.9 million contract (see separate story). CMD offers 18 courses that range from one to three weeks in length, as well as correspondence courses and computer-based instruction. The Aeronautical Center in Oklahoma City retains first-line supervision over the school.

"This beautiful [school] reflects a new and higher value the agency is placing on the training of its managerial workforce," Whittington continued. "Some changes in what we teach and how we teach it have already been made. Many more will be coming over the next year or two."

These sentiments have been echoed by students in the first class, which began five days after the dedication. One said succinctly, "Faculty excellent, instruction excellent, course content excellent," comparing the CMD facilities favorably with those at the FBI Academy.

Another volunteered, "This is a fine facility and a super idea for training. The isolation from the job and family is invaluable for being able to focus on the actual training. Time is available to do



A curved driveway leads to the front entrance of the two-story school.



CMD's first registrants for its first class are Ernestine Fleece (left) and Christine Novasud of the Alaskan Region.



A typical, comfortable, individual dormitory room. Lacking when this photo was taken was a desk and chair.

Photos by Jean Hunter, FAA and Howard Travis, URC

## A Faculty for Excellence

By Rosalyn E. Levy

There's more to a school than classrooms, buildings and a campus, and that's where University Research Corporation comes in. The 22-year-old suburban Washington firm is under FAA contract to provide supervisory and management instructional services for the new Center for Management Development in Palm Coast, Fla.

When the first classes began in October, nearly 30 faculty members were on board, including instructors and specialists involved in curriculum development and course revision from the old Management Training School in Lawton, Okla. Ultimately, the full staff of 33 will train about 3,900 FAA managers and supervisors each year.

Under the concept of establishing a "Center of Excellence" for developing the competency needed by FAA managers and supervisors, University Research (URC), which operates national management and executive development programs and training centers, set high criteria for instructor selection.

One was a requirement for at least one year's experience either in developing a competency-based curriculum on management and supervision or in delivering it to managers and supervisors. Another criterion was an advanced degree in behavioral science, business administration or public administration. A third was management and supervisory experience in the public or private sector.

The faculty hired as a result included personnel transferred from URC headquarters in Chevy Chase, Md., former management Training School instructors and others identified through an extensive recruitment effort. Just under half of

the faculty members are women, 20 percent are minorities and 14 percent hold doctoral degrees.

To learn about the work and culture of the FAA, URC staff members visited the Jacksonville, Fla., ARTCC.

Prior to CMD's opening, URC held a four-day training program for the faculty to ensure that current theory and practice is incorporated into all course development and teaching. URC also instituted a comprehensive certification program for all instructors to ensure that their training skills met or exceeded FAA's and the company's quality levels.

With the staff in place, URC will turn to assisting the CMD in seeking accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for all of the center's programs and courses. The company also intends to link CMD course content to the realities of the workplace by using experienced and successful managers and supervisors as role models in several courses.

A specialist in training, developing instructional materials and performing other training services to improve productivity and develop human resources, URC has operated more than a dozen national education and training centers for federal agencies. It is also no stranger to FAA. URC redesigned the FAA Employee Orientation Program, developed the FAA Managerial/Supervisory Skills Inventory (MSSI) and developed and pilot-tested the course "Computer-Based Support for Management Decision-making."

Ms. Levy is the Director of Corporate Communications for the University Research Corporation, Bethesda, Md.



The Center for Management Development is nestled in a wooded area at Palm Coast, Fla., north of Daytona Beach.



Unveiling a dedicatory plaque to be mounted at the school's main entrance are Aeronautical Center Director James Richardson (left), Associate Administrator for Human Resource Management Gene Weithoner and FAA Acting Executive Director Robert Whittington (right).

the necessary study—the most important factor being "absorption" time."

Although there were some minor problems pointed out, one student noted that "Things are very organized, especially when considering we are the first class. There are a few problems, as would be expected in any new complex, that I am sure will be adjusted or corrected in the near future." A couple pointed to the delayed arrival of dormitory room desks for studying.

The students gave uniformly high

marks to the instructors and staff, including those in the cafeteria, and praised the food, the dormitory rooms and the classroom equipment.

A midwest controller was enthusiastic about the facility and the area and commented that "the people who live here have welcomed us in a spirit of warmth and friendship."

Although there are no recreational facilities on the property—but plenty nearby—the bike trails provided drew repeated praise, joined with the criticism that there wasn't enough bicycles.

That's praising with faint damns. The CMD is off to a good start. ■



A class in session shows an open-U arrangement, which is considered better for group interaction, and a computer-driven overhead projector.

## Feeling Fit

Everyone Needs a Shoulder

By J. Robert Dille, M.D.

Some articles I've read imply that stress is unnecessary, all bad and is to be eliminated at any cost. I disagree.

Some stress may be enjoyable, beneficial and even necessary for life, such as in games and athletics or in boosting productivity and in matters of performance and safety where alertness is required, particularly under monotonous conditions.

Boredom is frequently more stressful than hard work, and exercise can be more effective than a "happy hour" or tranquilizers for relieving stress.

The importance of 43 recent life changes as stressors, ranging from the death of a spouse to minor violations of the law, has been established in research at the University of Washington and the Navy Neuropsychiatric Research Unit.

Nice things were found to be stressful, too. Marriage was a bit more so than getting fired, and marital reconciliation and retirement were fairly high on the list.

What is significant is that people who experienced several recent life changes, but who had others with whom to discuss their problems, had no increases in illnesses or accidents. Having a long-term satisfying relationship with another person is probably more important to good health than any other factor. Laughter and being in charge of your life, with the ability to complete what you start, are big contributors to good health.

Many feel that everyday hassles of life cause more illness than major life changes. You can imagine how minor and frequent these incidents are from one nickname: the snapped shoelace

factor. For example, a study of police officers found that distorted press accounts about their work and frustrations with the judicial system were far more stressful than responding to a call on a felony in progress or making an arrest while alone. It's not difficult to translate this into your own fields of endeavor.

No matter what the magnitude of the hassle or life change, you should share it with your family or co-workers, as appropriate. Bottling it up can affect what you need to do, and can adversely affect safety. A metaphor for this might be: You should preflight not only the aircraft but also yourself for physical and emotional fitness before a flight. Approach your job not only with your skills but with the right attitudes and feelings by first releasing the nonproductive tensions.

Stress responses vary with the individual. Having a job abolished, for example, can be catastrophic for one person and be a golden opportunity to start on a new career for another.

If stress is affecting your health and making you an accident risk on the road, on the job or in the air, if you've tried confiding in others and working it off in physical activity, and laughter won't come, there are stress-management programs you should try. In a few hours, these sessions may help you to recognize these life changes, hassles and frustrations, to learn how to relax, to adopt a safe exercise program and to learn coping techniques.

Dr. Dille is the former manager of the Civil Aeronautical Institute at the Aeronautical Center in Oklahoma City. He retires this month.

## IMPACT 88

continued from page 1

In late August, McArctor took the matter a step further by meeting with the chief pilots of the nation's air carriers and the representatives of major user groups in Kansas City. The Administrator stressed the need for new approaches to crew training that would reach beyond traditional concepts. Noting that "pilots don't cause accidents, crews do," he also emphasized the importance of crew communications and crew coordination in the flight safety equation.

This, in turn, led to the formation of a government-industry task force to study the pilot training issue, with particular emphasis on human factors, and to recommended changes in existing programs. McArctor says that he expects this will lead to the first real update of pilot training requirements since the introduction of turbojet aircraft almost 30 years ago.

Airline accountability—another of the IMPACT 88 planks—had McArctor's attention before his arrival at FAA. Coming as he did from the private sector, he noted that corporate heads must file financial statements with the Securities and Exchange Commission and are liable for criminal penalties if the data is fraudulent.

McArctor's idea was that corporate CEOs also should be held personally responsible for the airline's safety performance. Such an approach, he believes, would help ensure the margin of safety the American public has come to expect in aviation.

IMPACT 88 team member Dan Beaudette, who also functions as the manager of Flight Standards' Air Carrier Division, points out that McArctor's bottom line assumption is that the airlines do operate safely, but the Administrator wants to validate that fact by accepting greater responsibility for compliance with safety regulations. Beaudette stated that the agency currently is developing a self-inspection manual to help the carriers identify and correct problems.

Like Don Engen, who preceded him as FAA Administrator, McArctor believes that the future of aviation is inexorably bound to the issue of airport development and has made this another of his IMPACT 88 priorities. Although he sometimes compares the current need for a national airport system to the need for the Interstate Highway System developed during the 1950s, he recognizes that we are now dealing with a different set of public concerns.

As team member and Eastern Regional Counsel Darlene Freeman observed, "The issues then were primarily funding. Today there are a host of noise, environmental and community concerns

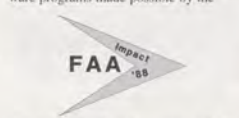


The author (right) discusses with Donald K. Funai, manager of the Flight Procedures Standards Branch, Office of Flight Standards, the LDA-A approach procedures and minimum descent altitude to a Colorado airport following an accident there. Photo by Joe Carroll

that make the odds a lot longer." Still, McArctor believes that elevating the issue of airport development, perhaps even to the level of the presidential campaign, is absolutely necessary for long-term system expansion.

Closely tied to accelerated airport development is the need to improve the efficient use of the nation's airspace. The model for this IMPACT 88 initiative is the Expanded East Coast Plan (EECP), which was partially implemented in February 1987 and is credited with delay reductions of up to 40 percent in the New York metropolitan area. Another 11 percent reduction is projected for additional EECP (Phase II) measures that were put into effect on Nov. 19. A West Coast Plan already is on the drawing boards and a Midcontinent Plan is targeted for the 1990s.

FAA also will address other airspace management issues, implement regulations governing the use of Mode C transponders and increase the use of the Aircraft Situation Display in managing the flow of air traffic. These developments will be strengthened by new software programs made possible by the



operation of the Host Computer in the 20 domestic air route traffic control centers.

Jack Loewenstein, the team member from the Systems Engineering Service, acknowledges that the advanced technology plank of the IMPACT 88 program is essential to a longer-range effort but stresses the importance of getting the related research and development moving as quickly as possible.

The basic work on the advanced Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance Systems (TCAS III) and Automatic

Dependent Surveillance has been largely completed, and there is a need now to develop them into operational realities, he says. Similar emphasis on other programs, such as Mode S data link, can accelerate its useful applications.

Although aviation has an excellent safety record, public perception of it has been skewed by press reports of near midair collisions, operational errors and flight delays. To provide the public with a balanced view of the air transportation system and to restore its trust, FAA will improve its external communications. The goal will be to boost public understanding of FAA programs and shape a positive awareness of aviation safety and economics.

Despite the excellent record of U.S. airlines in the anti-hijacking area, air transportation security is another McArctor priority. He believes "eternal vigilance" is the only way to maintain that record.

Research and development on improved detection systems for weapons and explosives are being accelerated, and FAA also is moving to strengthen security bonds with other nations. Among other initiatives, the agency intends to implement security agreements with foreign carriers operating into the United States and sponsor an international civil aviation security conference to discuss innovative solutions to common problems.

The final plank of the IMPACT 88 platform is improved agency effectiveness. McArctor already has petitioned DOT and gained approval to exercise increased authority over FAA procurements, including a boost from \$200,000

to \$150 million. He also is asking for additional authority in executive personnel matters and wants to streamline the coordination of regulatory actions.

Another priority in this area is the recruitment, training and retention of air traffic controllers and other safety personnel. Acting quickly on this initiative, the agency has begun a review of controller training methods and has met with the Office of Personnel Management and discussed taking over the recruitment and hiring of controllers.

One of McArctor's personal initiatives has been to institute focus groups as a means of communicating with agency employees. Two focus groups were held in Atlanta this fall with air traffic controllers and flight standards employees. The Administrator is anxious to continue this program as an important source of information and insight for him and other senior level managers who are meeting with the groups.

By mid-October, the IMPACT 88 team had largely accomplished its mission, and the process of institutionalizing the program began. In an Oct. 22 memorandum to members of his management team, McArctor made the following assignments for implementing the IMPACT 88 program elements:

Aviation Standards is responsible for air crew performance, airline accountability and air transportation security; General Counsel Ted Ellett is charged with the airport development issues; Air Traffic is assigned airspace capacity; Development and Logistics has responsibility for the advanced technology programs; Public Affairs was given the aviation awareness programs; and Human Resource Management and Administration share the responsibility for the initiatives included in improving agency effectiveness.

Each plank of the IMPACT 88 platform will be developed into a working paper to guide policy decisions. Timetables and performance goals are being established by the responsible program offices and tracked under a system being developed within the Office of Management Systems.

Still, in the final analysis, the implementation of IMPACT 88 will rest with the men and women who comprise the FAA workforce—the people that McArctor calls the "agents of change in the system." That's why he is so confident of the program's success. As he has said on a number of occasions: "I have great confidence that the people of the FAA will respond to the challenges of the coming year to improve air transportation for the American people." ■



Flight watch (EFAS) specialist Frank Massie provides enroute flight advisories to airborne aircraft while monitoring a weather radar (right).



Ron Schultz, Kankakee assistant manager, patches into a second Model I communications line to bypass a line outage.

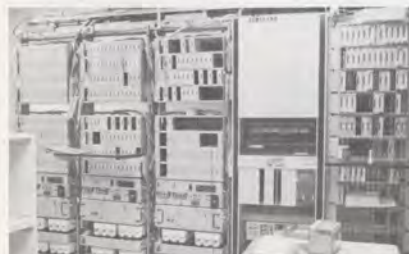
## The Modern Face of an Automated FSS—Kankakee, Ill.



Preparing a new tape reel for position recording is specialist Mike Perkins.



Area supervisor Collin Tocke views the new Aldena Graphics system for comparison with weather reports he requested from the Model I system.



Racks of telephone communications equipment that works on new fiber optic lines also show the station's emergency battery backup.



With a weather radar display available to pilots right on the counter, specialist Linda McCleary works the pilot briefing counter for walk-ins.



## FAA's Own Alphabet Soup

By Fred Farrar

The logic of it sparkles when you are going to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport and the airport identifier tag the airline puts on your luggage reads *JFK*. And it holds up pretty well with such airport identifiers as *LGA* for LaGuardia and *MDW* for Chicago's Midway.

But what if you are going to Key West, Fla., and the tag reads *EYW*? Or your destination is Nantucket, Mass., and the tag says *ACK*? Or you're getting off at Wichita, Kan., and the tag says your luggage is getting off at *ICT*. Then logic seems to take a beating.

But it doesn't really, when you consider how the system the FAA uses to assign the three-letter identifiers got its start, how it grew, and how it is constrained.

In the beginning, airports were few, and the system was simple. The identifiers were two-letter ones, which in most cases were the radio call signs of weather stations associated with the airports. Thus Chicago was *CG*, Omaha was *OM*, and Kansas City, Kan., was *KC*.

But as airports became more numerous with the growth of civil aviation, it became clear that the two-letter system was not flexible enough to take care of them all. So a three-letter system was adopted, and Los Angeles, for example, which had been *LA*, became *LAX* to distinguish it from Las Vegas, *LAS*.

What didn't change, however, was the tradition of having the letters double as radio call signs. This brought the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) into the picture since it regulates the issuance of the call signs.

The FCC's regulations say that the call signs can't start with "W" because that is reserved for commercial broadcast stations east of the Mississippi, that they can't start with "K" because that is reserved for commercial stations west of the Mississippi, and that they can't start with "N" because that is reserved for the Navy. The block beginning with "Q" is under international telecommunications jurisdiction. "Y" and "Z" are authorized for assignment by Transport Canada.

Subsequently, the FCC transferred the responsibility of assigning the identifiers to the FAA. But with the responsibility



went the restrictions on *K*, *W*, *N*, *Q*, and *Z*.

This left the FAA with the challenge of assigning identifiers to airports whose names start with those letters without beginning the identifier with them.

The FAA tries its best to come up with identifiers that at least suggest the actual

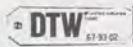


name of the place. But without being able to use the first letter, the difficulties are obvious. And these are compounded by FAA requirements that an identifier can't be duplicated anywhere in the world and that the first and second, second and third or third and first letters of a three-letter identifier cannot be duplicated within a 200-mile radius.

They are further compounded by the fact that the FAA also assigns three-letter identifiers to certain navigation aids, such as radio beacons and instrument landing systems. This increases the possibility of conflict.

Thus, Winston-Salem, N.C., becomes *INT* and Needles, Calif., shows up as *EED*. The Kansas City, Mo., airport is *MKC* to the man who handles your baggage (a little reverse logic here), and the Quincy, Ill., airport is *UIN*.

This is a good place to point out, before someone else does, that there are exceptions to the rule, such as *KCK* for Fairfax Field in Kansas City, Kan. Most of these, as is the case with *KCK*, result from an airport enjoying what the FAA calls "grandfather rights" by virtue of having had the restricted letter leading



The assistant manager of the Public & Employee Communications Division, Mr. Farrar is a former Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune.

off its identifier before the FCC imposed its rule.

But these exceptions are few, so Natchez, Miss., whose airport isn't old enough to be a grandfather, is *HEZ*. The same goes for Kenosha, Wis., which is *ENW*, Quakertown, Pa., which doubles as *UKT*, and—as you'll discover the next time you go there—Weeping Water, Neb., which is *EPG*.

So, if it all sounds a little cryptic, blame it on the restrictions. Because when the FAA is given a free hand, it usually comes reasonably close to matching the identifier with the name.

Miami International Airport, for example, is *MIA*, and Florence, S.C., is appropriately, if not necessarily affectionately, known to your travel agent as *FLO*.

Nor does it tax the brain to recognize *DEN* as the identifier for Denver, *PHX*



as the code for Phoenix, Ariz., or *PNS* as the tag for Pensacola, Fla.

In the same vein, *SSM* can hardly stand for anything other than what it is—Sault Saint Marie, Mich. And then there is Ely, Nev., whose identifier—allowing for no possibility of error—reads *ELY*.

There are other identifiers that not only do not very much resemble the name of the airport but which also cannot be blamed on the FCC restrictions.

The best known of these probably is *ORD* for Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

It goes back to the days prior to World War II when there was a loosely knit area northwest of Chicago known as Orchard, which had a small airport of the same name. The airport was given the identifier *ORD* and it flourished and grew—first as the site of an aircraft plant during the war, then as an Air National Guard field and finally as O'Hare International Airport—while the Orchard area gradually surrendered its identity to rapidly growing surrounding suburbs.

But *ORD* stuck as the identifier and continues to stick. That it does is illustrative of the fact that once the FAA settles on an identifier for an airport, it is reluctant to change it.

Another example is the change of Friendship Airport to Baltimore-Washington International Airport. It's generally known by the abbreviation *BWI*, but



the location identifier remains as it's always been, *BAL*.

The FAA will change an identifier if there is a proven need for the change. And on even rarer occasions, it will make a change for memorial reasons. But it resists making changes for aesthetic reasons, such as when a city complains that the identifier isn't representative enough.

This is because such changes not only cost money—the FAA estimates that it costs the airline industry around the world in excess of seven million dollars to update their schedules, reprogram their computers and make changes in such things as stationery and invoices, uniforms and baggage claim tickets when a change is made—but also create confusion in operations, causing baggage to be misdirected, for example.

Confusion can also result on the rare

occasions when the FAA makes an unfortunate choice in giving an airport an identifier. This happened in the case of Dulles International Airport west of Washington, D.C.

When it opened in November of 1962, the FAA assigned it the very logical



identifier *DIA*. But it turned out that logic isn't everything and that *DIA* could easily be confused with *DCA*, which is the identifier for Washington National Airport. There were even instances of pilots, who up to then had been flying into Washington National, putting *DCA* on

their flight plans from force of habit when, in fact, they were headed for Dulles.

The result was that pilots bound for Dulles sometimes found themselves routed to Washington National. And while the mistakes were always discovered in time and there was no safety hazard involved, there were delays and some embarrassed pilots and air traffic controllers.



It was a case where there was a proven need for a change and the change was made. Dulles International Airport is now *IAD*.

The most recent instance of an identifier being changed for memorial reasons was when New York's Idlewild Airport (*IDL*) was renamed John F. Kennedy International Airport (*JFK*) in April of 1964 following the President's assassination.

But that wasn't the end for *IDL*, because the FAA doesn't like to let a good, usable identifier go to waste. After a seven-year resting period—in which it was hoped that its previous association had faded from memory—it was assigned to a radio beacon and airport in Indianola, Miss. ■

## She Could Do Anything



Vina Showers' father taught her that she could do anything and gave her the education she needed to do it. The effort was not wasted. This daughter of a

Mississippi cotton sharecropper rose from a GS-3 clerk to manager of the FAA Depot at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

She also became the first black woman in the FAA to be named to the Senior Executive Service.

Showers' family would say she is fulfilling what they expected of her. "My father had a non-traditional view of gender," she recalls, "and he did not allow me to accept any limitations of race or gender. I was taught to read, farm, dance... everything. He held down several jobs to pay for my private schooling, which was not unusual in Mississippi."

She was taught to read at age three, entered school at age four and was graduated from high school at 16. After a year and a half at Jackson State University, she left to marry an Air Force enlisted man, following him to various military bases.

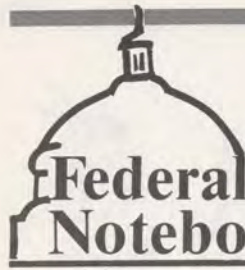
Showers became a GS-3 clerk-typist at Oklahoma's Tinker Air Force Base in 1956, then moved on and returned there three years later. She joined the FAA in 1967 as a GS-9 inventory management specialist and entered the University of Oklahoma as a non-resident student. Juggling her job, the raising of three chil-

dren and studies, she was graduated in 1972.

Her bootstrapping wasn't over, however. As she rose in the federal service, she took on night law school, earning a law degree in 1977. Her career then took her to the Acquisition and Materiel Service in Washington, then to the Depot.

The values learned at her father's knee have been passed along. Her daughter Vicki is a student at the University of Oklahoma Medical School; son Michael is an engineer in Dallas; and daughter Vera is an artist in New York City.

Vina Showers now heads up an organization that serves as a supply, repair and design and engineering service to FAA facilities worldwide. "It's a challenge for me," she says, "—an opportunity to manage and make things happen. I want to see the Depot take its central position in the NAS Plan." ■



# Federal Notebook

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## PAY REFORM TAKING OFF

Hearings have been held in the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee on proposals to overhaul the federal pay-setting system. Although all parties appear to agree that a change is needed, there isn't agreement on what to replace it with.

The leading contender is HR-3132, which would create up to 10 alternative pay experiments, each covering up to 25,000 employees, and would require that annual federal raises equal the private-sector average.

Meanwhile, there's a proposal in the Senate to round down to the nearest dollar the two-percent or no-longer-certain three-percent January raise to help reduce the deficit. It would save about \$26 million.

## THERE'S NO FREE LUNCH

The U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) has restated a 1965 executive order that prohibits Executive Branch employees from accepting one-on-one meals from anyone who does so because of an employee's government position. Employees are barred from accepting

meals and entertainment from contract seekers, contractors, lobbyists, regulated businesses or trade associations, public interest groups or journalists.

Excluded from the thou shalt nots are members of the Legislative and Judicial branches, long-time friends or family members and "rubber chicken" meals--those that are served as part of an event, such as a convention.

Although the standards are set by executive order, guidelines and law, individual agencies defined the regulations. The Federal Communications Commission had been approving meals under \$35, but asked for guidance on where to draw the line. OGE said the cost was not the issue. That's what you get for asking.

## CHILD CARE BOOSTED

The General Services Administration (GSA) has created and filled a high-level position from which federal agencies will be encouraged to make child care more available in federal buildings.

New facilities are scheduled to open within the next year in many cities, including Chicago; Denver; Fort Snelling, Minn.; and Suitland, Md. GSA has opened one in its own headquarters building, bringing to 10 the number now operating in federal buildings.

## FERS DECISION MAY BE DEFERRED

Because Congress is still considering a variety of revisions to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) law, leaving many pre-1984

employees uncertain as to what benefits they would or would not get under FERS, an extension of the open season for electing FERS of three to six months is considered likely.

Proposals now included in the House budget reconciliation bill are a FERS extension of the public-pension-offset penalty for spousal Social Security benefits and a reduction to 25 years for the time a federal retiree would need under Social Security to avoid a windfall benefits penalty. Another proposal being considered but drawing some fire is the exemption of higher-income employees from the "anti-discrimination rule" that limits contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan.

## IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING

Because funds of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) were invested solely in government securities--the G Fund--the TSP was unaffected by the Black Monday market crash. However, during the current TSP open season, FERS investors have the opportunity to select a fixed-income fund (F Fund) or a common stock index fund (C Fund) for 1988, if they're willing to increase their risk.

## SES GETS TO GO HOME

A bill has been introduced in the Senate that would reimburse retiring Senior Executive Service personnel for a "last move home" from their duty station. It would place SES personnel, who must accept transfers, on a par with foreign service and military personnel, who already have the benefit.

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