

FAA Remembers: Key 2011 Anniversaries

85th Anniversary of:

Federal Regulation of Aviation

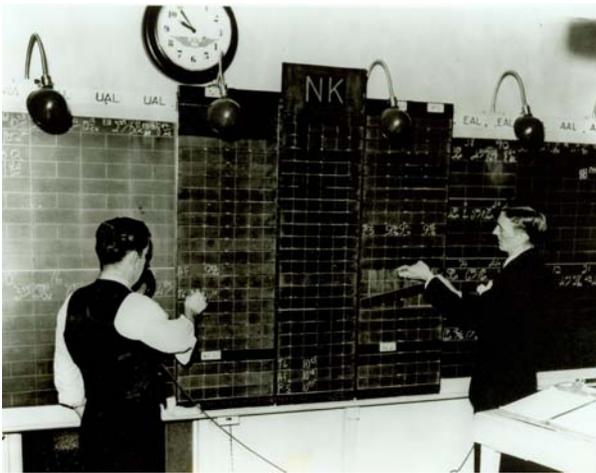


President Calvin Coolidge, Courtesy of Library of Congress

May 20, 1926: President Calvin Coolidge signed the Air Commerce Act of 1926 into law. The act instructed the Secretary of Commerce to foster air commerce; designate and establish airways; establish, operate, and maintain aids to air navigation (but not airports); arrange for research and development to improve such aids; license pilots; issue airworthiness certificates for aircraft and major aircraft components; and investigate accidents.

75th Anniversary of:

Federal Control of Air Traffic



1937 Newark Airway Traffic Control Center

July 6, 1936: Federal air traffic control began as the Bureau of Air Commerce (FAA predecessor organization) took over operation of the first airway traffic control centers at Newark, Chicago, and Cleveland established and operated by a consortium of airlines. When the Bureau assumed control of the centers, it hired fifteen center employees to become the original Federal corps of airway controllers.

70th Anniversary of:

Opening of Washington National Airport



1940s Washington National Airport

June 16, 1941: CAA officially opened Washington National Airport for full-time operations. By the end of the year, almost 300,000 passengers had enplaned or deplaned at the airport, and scheduled air carrier operations reached a high of 192 daily in the month of September.

Federal Control of Airport Traffic Control Towers



1940s Civil Aeronautics Administration air traffic control tower, Buffalo, NY

November 1, 1941: CAA began operating airport traffic control towers. (Prior to this time, towers were operated by local airport authorities, except at CAA-managed Washington National Airport.) By November 15, the Agency controlled towers at Albuquerque, NM; Atlanta, GA; Charlotte, NC; Floyd Bennett Field, NY; Orlando, FL; Portland, OR; Salt Lake City, UT; and Savannah, GA.

65th Anniversary of:

FAA Aeronautical Center



1940s Training Class, Oklahoma City, OK

March 15, 1946: CAA announced the selection of Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, OK, for the location of its new aeronautical center for training and maintenance. The agency immediately relocated the Standardization Center (Houston), the general aircraft maintenance base for the Midwest, and the Signals Division School, and planned eventually to move all Federal airways schools and similar Agency activities to this central location.

Federal Aid to Airports



1940s Atlanta Municipal Airport

May 13, 1946: President Truman signed the Federal Airport Act establishing the Federal-aid airport program, the first peacetime program of financial aid aimed exclusively at promoting development of the nation's civil airports. The Act authorized appropriations of \$500 million for the contiguous United States and \$20 million for Alaska and Hawaii over a period of seven years, beginning July 1, 1946. Federal allotments were to be matched by local funds.

30th Anniversary of:

Air Traffic Controllers Strike



1981 Picketing in front of FAA Headquarters, Washington, DC

August 3, 1981: Nearly 12,300 members of the 15,000-member Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) went on strike, beginning at 7 a.m., EST, grounding approximately 35 percent of the nation's 14,200 daily commercial flights. Shortly before 11 a.m. on August 3, President Ronald Reagan issued the strikers a firm ultimatum: return to work within 48 hours or face permanent dismissal. The government moved swiftly on three fronts -- civil, criminal, and administrative -- to bring the full force of the law to bear on the strikers. In a series of legal steps, Federal officials:

- Asked the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) to decertify PATCO as the bargaining agent for the 17,200 controllers and controller staff members.

- Moved to impound the union's \$3.5 million strike fund.
- Filed criminal complaints in Federal courts in eleven cities against twenty-two PATCO officials. Sought restraining orders against the strikers in thirty-three courts.

Approximately 875 controllers returned to work during the 48 hour grace period granted. After expiration of the grace period, about 11,400 controllers were dismissed. Most of those fired appealed the action, and 440 were eventually reinstated as a result of their appeals.

The strike and dismissals drastically curtailed FAA's controller workforce. According to DOT's FY 1982 annual report, the firings reduced the number of controllers at the full performance or developmental level from about 16,375 to about 4,200. To keep the airways open, approximately 3,000 ATC supervisory personnel worked at controlling traffic. FAA assigned assistants to support the controllers, and accelerated the hiring and training of new air traffic personnel. Military controllers arrived at FAA facilities soon after the strike began, and about 800 were ultimately assigned to the agency. The day the strike began, FAA adopted Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 44, establishing provisions for implementing an interim air traffic control operations plan. That plan allowed FAA, among other things, to limit the number of aircraft in the national airspace system. Hence, on August 5, the agency implemented a plan dubbed "Flow Control 50," whereby air carriers were required to cancel approximately 50 percent of their scheduled peak-hour flights at 22 major airports. FAA maintained an en route horizontal spacing between aircraft under instrument flight rules of up to 30 miles. Aircraft were kept on the ground, as necessary, to maintain this spacing. FAA gave priority to medical emergency flights, Presidential flights, flights transporting critical FAA employees, and flights dictated by military necessity. General aviation flights operated under the severest restrictions. Aircraft with a gross takeoff weight of 12,500 pounds or less were prohibited from flying under instrument flight rules; moreover, aircraft flying under visual flight rules were prohibited from entering terminal control areas. Other general aviation aircraft were served, as conditions permitted, on a first-come-first-served basis.

10th Anniversary of:

9/11 Terrorist Attacks



Courtesy Library of Congress

September 11, 2001: Nineteen radical Islamic extremists with the group al Qaeda penetrated security at three major airports, seized four U.S. domestic airliners, and turned them into missiles that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City, and damaged the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, killing thousands. Passengers on one of the planes fought the hijackers causing the plane to crash in a Pennsylvania field, killing all on board. For the first time in history, FAA put a ground stop on all U.S. air traffic.

Eastern Standard Time

- 7:59 a.m.: American Airlines Flight 11, a Boeing 767 with 92 people on board, takes off from Boston Logan airport for Los Angeles.
- 8:14 a.m.: United Air Lines Flight 175, a Boeing 767 with 65 people on board, takes off from Boston Logan airport for Los Angeles.
- 8:20 a.m.: American Airlines Flight 77, a Boeing 757 with 64 people on board, takes off from Washington Dulles airport for Los Angeles.
- 8:38 a.m.: FAA notifies the North American Aerospace Defense Command's (NORAD) Northeast Air Defense Sector about the suspected hijacking of American Flight 11.
- 8:42 a.m.: United Air Lines Flight 93, a Boeing 757 with 44 people on board, takes off from Newark airport for San Francisco.
- 8:46 a.m.: American Flight 11 crashes into the north tower of the World Trade Center.
- 9:03 a.m. (approx.): United Flight 175 crashes into the south tower of the World Trade Center.
- 9:04 a.m.: FAA's Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center stops all departures from airports in its jurisdiction (New England and eastern New York State).
- 9:06 a.m.: FAA bans takeoffs of all flights bound to or through the airspace of New York Center from airports in that air route traffic control center and the three adjacent air route traffic control centers – Boston, Cleveland and Washington. This is referred to as a first tier ground stop and covers the Northeast from North Carolina north and as far west as eastern Michigan.
- 9:08 a.m.: FAA bans all takeoffs nationwide for flights going to or through New York Center airspace.
- 9:15 a.m.: FAA (New York Center) notifies NORAD's Northeast Air Defense Sector that United Airlines 175 was the second aircraft that crashed into the World Trade Center.
- 9:25 a.m.: FAA bans takeoffs of all civilian aircraft regardless of destination – a national ground stop.
- 9:37 a.m.: American Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon.
- 9:45 a.m.: In the first unplanned shutdown of U. S. airspace, FAA orders all aircraft to land at the nearest airport as soon as practical. At this time, there were more than 4,500 aircraft in the air on instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plans.
- 10:03 a.m.: United Flight 93 crashes in Stony Creek Township, Pennsylvania.
- 10:39 a.m.: Reaffirming the earlier order, FAA issues a notice to airmen (NOTAM) that halts takeoffs and landings at all airports.
- 12:15 p.m.: The airspace over the 48 contiguous states is clear of all commercial and private flights.
- 2:30 p.m.: FAA announces there will be no U.S. air traffic until noon Eastern Standard Time Wednesday at the earliest.