

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Air Traffic Organization Policy

N JO 7110.747

Effective Date:
May 3, 2018

Cancellation Date:
September 13, 2018

SUBJ: Formation Flights

- 1. Purpose of This Notice.** This notice cancels and replaces N JO 7110.747 with revised language which updates FAA Order JO 7110.65, 2-1-13 Formation Flights, in order to clarify ATC responsibilities and to give guidance to ATC facilities and the service centers.
- 2. Audience.** This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: Air Traffic Services and associated air traffic control facilities, Mission Support, System Operations, and Technical Operations.
- 3. Where Can I Find This Notice?** This notice is available on the MyFAA employee website at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/ and on the air traffic publications website at http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/.
- 4. Cancellation.** This notice is cancelled with the publication of FAA Order JO 7110.65X, Change 2.
- 5. Explanation of Policy Change.** This change outlines controller responsibilities regarding formation flight join-up and clarifies controller responsibility during formation flight break-up. The language regarding pilot responsibilities during formation flight was also changed to language currently published in FAA Order JO 7610.4, the Pilot Controller Glossary (PCG) and in ICAO Annex 2.
- 6. Procedures/Responsibilities/Action.**

2-1-13. FORMATION FLIGHTS

Control formation flights as a single aircraft. Separation responsibility between aircraft within the formation rests with the flight leader and the pilots of the other aircraft in the flight. This includes transition periods when aircraft within the formation are maneuvering to attain separation from each other to effect individual control during join-up and breakaway.

REFERENCE—

*PCG – Formation Flight
7610.4, Chapter 12, Section 11. Formation Flight
ICAO Annex 2, 3.1.8 Formation Flights*

- a. Support formation flight join-up when all of the following occur:
 1. Requested by any participating pilot.
 2. All participating pilots concur.
 3. Each of the participating pilots reports the other/s in sight.

EXAMPLE –

“ROOK01 has EAGLE03 in sight, request formation join-up with EAGLE03 at flight level two zero zero. EAGLE03 will be the lead.”

“EAGLE03 verify requesting flight join-up with ROOK01 and you have ROOK01 in sight.”

If affirmative:

“ROOK01 climb and maintain flight level two zero zero. Report (advise) when formation join-up is complete.”

b. If multiple single aircraft request to join-up, multiple formations are joining as one, or aircraft are joining an established formation, obtain confirmation of required items listed in 2-1-13. a, from the lead aircraft.

REFERENCE-

PCG – Formation Flight

c. After join-up, aircraft beacon code assignment will be determined by formation type.

1. For a standard formation only the aircraft acting as the lead will squawk an ATC assigned beacon code. Ensure all other aircraft squawk standby.

2. For a nonstandard formation, each aircraft should squawk an ATC assigned beacon code. Controller discretion allows aircraft in a nonstandard formation to squawk standby if operationally advantageous.

REFERENCE-

FAA Order JO 7610.4, Paragraph 12-11-6 Nonstandard Formation Tactics, Subparagraph b3.

EXAMPLE –

“N123JP squawk standby.”

Or

“N123SP have N123JP squawk standby.”

d. When formation break-up is requested, issue control instructions and/or clearances which will result in approved separation through the lead or directly to the requesting aircraft in the formation.

EXAMPLE –

“N5871S requesting flight break-up with N731K. N731K is changing destination to PHL.”

“N731K squawk 5432, turn right, fly heading zero-seven-zero.”

“Center, BAMA21. BAMA23 is requesting to RTB.”

“BAMA21 have BAMA23 squawk 5544, descend and maintain flight level one-niner-zero and change to my frequency.”

“Center, BAMA21. BAMA23 is requesting to RTB.”

“BAMA23 squawk 5544. BAMA23 Radar contact (position if required). Cleared to SSC via direct. Descend and maintain flight level one-niner-zero.”

Re-letter subparagraph **b.** as subparagraph **e.**

No further changes to paragraph.

7. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support Services, and System Operations, and Safety and Technical Training; the Air Traffic

Safety Oversight Service; the William J. Hughes Technical Center; and the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

8. Background. Since the original publication of the Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.65 on January 1, 1976 there have only been two updates to the formation flight paragraph. The first occurred on April 1, 1979 in FAA Order 7110.65A, Change 5, when language was removed from the main paragraph and added back as two separate notes. The second change was the addition of the RVSM information on August 4, 2005 in FAA Order 7110.65P, Change 3. Over the years the exact meaning of the language in this paragraph has caused confusion. In addition to formal interpretations being issued in 1995, 2001 and 2017 there have been numerous requests for clarification and guidance from facilities and the service centers regarding different aspects of the paragraph.

Original signed by *Sharon Kurywchak*

Sharon Kurywchak
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3/28/2018

Date Signed