

# NOTICE

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

N JO 7610.110

**Effective Date:**  
August 22, 2016

**Cancellation Date:**  
November 10, 2016

**SUBJ:** Assignment of Call Signs and Associated Telephonies

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**1. Purpose of This Notice.** This Notice reflects changes that have occurred to the assignment process and authorization of use policies for ICAO three letter designators (3LD), special call sign designators, local call signs, and associated telephonies. These changes update policy and procedures in FAA Orders to align them with current practices and provide clarity on the process.

**2. Audience.** This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support, and System Operations; all associated air traffic control facilities; and anyone using ATO directives.

**3. Where Can I Find This Notice?** This notice is available on the MyFAA employee Web site at [https://employees.faa.gov/tools\\_resources/orders\\_notices/](https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/) and on the air traffic publications Web site at [http://www.faa.gov/air\\_traffic/publications/](http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/).

**4. Explanation of Policy Change.** The changes in this Notice add new Chapter 17, *Flight Data Security*, and Section 2, *Assignment of Call Signs and Associated telephonies*, to FAA Order 7610.4. The new section provides updates to the ICAO 3LD request and assignment process for aircraft operators and the FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO). Changes include updated responsibilities and procedures required by ATO Aeronautical Information Services (AIS) and ATO System Operations Security offices to effect call sign and associated telephony assignments. The increased Air Traffic Management (ATM) security aspect of aircraft identification within the National Airspace System (NAS) has led to publishing these assignment procedures and authorization of use policies into FAAO JO 7610.4, *Special Operations*. With FAAO 7610.4 now the source document for call sign assignment procedures, Section 3 of FAA Order 7340.2, *Contractions*, will be removed. Also, Advisory Circular 120-26, *ICAO Aircraft Company Three-Letter Identifier and/or Telephony Designator Assignments and U.S. Special Telephony/Call Signs*, will be updated to reflect the changes in this Notice, for release to the aviation community and general public.

**5. Procedures.** Amend FAA Order 7610.4 with the changes and additions as follows:

## Chapter 17. Flight Data Security

### Section 1. Sensitive Flight Data Identification and Protection

(Reserved)

### Section 2. Assignment of Call Sign Designators and Associated Telephonies

**17-2-1. GENERAL**

**a.** This section contains policy and procedures for FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) and aircraft operators regarding FAA assignment and authorization for use of call sign designators and associated telephonies for U.S. registered civil aircraft, U.S. governmental aircraft, and certain U.S. military aircraft. Aircraft operated by commercial companies, government agencies, and private organizations may need call signs and telephonies for operations within the air traffic control (ATC) system. Flight servicing companies and organizations also need ICAO three letter designators (3LD) for addressing flight messages.

**b.** The three types of call sign designators and telephonies authorized for use by FAA ATO and described in this section are as follows:

1. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) three letter designators (3LD) and associated telephony;
2. Special call sign designator and associated telephony; and
3. Local call sign designator and associated telephony.

**c.** Listings of authorized ICAO 3LDs, special call sign designators, and associated telephonies are contained in Chapter 3 of *FAA Order 7340.2, Contractions*, except for authorized call sign designators and associated telephonies which are contained in *FAA Order 7110.67, Air Traffic Management Security Services for Special Activities*.

**NOTE-**

*FAA Order 7110.67 is not available for public release.*

**17-2-2. PURPOSE**

FAA assignment and authorization of call signs is an air traffic management (ATM) security measure for aircraft identification that is fundamental to the security and safety of the National Airspace System (NAS). The FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) must ensure that every call sign is properly authorized, clearly related to the type of operation permitted, and is used within the NAS in accordance with its authorization. The procedures in this section explain the FAA process for assignment of call sign designators and associated telephonies; and describe the requirements for authorization of their use domestically within the NAS and internationally in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) policies.

**17-2-3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) responsibilities are as follows:

**a.** ATO System Operations Security is responsible for the security of call signs and must ensure the use of call signs is compliant with FAA security policies;

**b.** ATO System Operations Security is responsible for authorizing use of call signs for governmental aircraft operators (Federal, State, local, tribal, and law enforcement aircraft);

**c.** ATO Aeronautical Information Services (AIS) is responsible for authorizing use of call signs for civil aircraft operators;

**d.** ATO AIS must coordinate all civil call sign requests with ATO System Operations Security to validate the request and ensure use of the proposed call signs is compliant with FAA security policies;

**e.** ATO System Operations Security is responsible for security agreements that authorize third party use of civil call signs;

**f.** ATO AIS must ensure that the call sign authorization procedures in this section are referenced in *FAA Order 7340.2, Contractions*.

**g.** ATO AIS must ensure 3LDs and special call signs for civil aircraft are updated in *FAA Order 7340.2*.

#### **17-2-4. POLICY FOR ICAO THREE-LETTER DESIGNATORS (3LD) AND ASSOCIATED TELEPHONIES**

**a.** ICAO three-letter designators (3LD) and associated telephony are approved and assigned by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), but authorized for use by the FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO). The requirements are as follows:

**1.** ICAO 3LDs and associated telephonies are valid only for use in accordance with the provisions set forth and specified in the following:

- (a) Company operating certificate;
- (b) Flight servicing organization procedures; or
- (c) ATO instructions and security agreements.

**2.** Pilots are required to use standard identification procedures (i.e., aircraft registration number) when operating outside of such provisions.

**3.** The ICAO 3LD, together with a flight number (see paragraph 17-2-9.b. for more details), serves as the aircraft identification for the ATC system and is used instead of the aircraft registration number for ATC security and operational purposes.

**4.** ICAO 3LDs are used for international telecommunications services, including the Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN).

**b.** ICAO 3LDs and associated telephonies may be assigned to:

**1.** Scheduled 14 CFR Part 121 and Part 135 aircraft operators that operate seven or more non-seasonal international air operations each week or at least 15 non-seasonal domestic round-trip air operations each week;

**NOTE-**

**1.** *Part 121 aircraft operators are governed by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), specifically, 14 CFR 121 "Operating Requirements: Domestic, Flag, and Supplemental Operations."*

**2.** *Part 135 aircraft operators are governed by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), specifically, 14 CFR 135 "Operating Requirements: Commuter and On Demand Operations and Rules Governing Persons on Board Such Aircraft."*

**2.** Chartered 14 CFR aircraft operators engaged in commercial international flight operations or at least 15 non-seasonal domestic air operations each week.

**3.** Organizations, such as corporations, flight servicing companies, government agencies, and charitable organizations.

**c.** ICAO 3LDs and associated telephonies cannot be used by third parties unless permission is explicitly granted through a security agreement with ATO System Operations Security.

#### **17-2-5. ASSIGNMENT OF ICAO THREE-LETTER DESIGNATORS (3LD) AND ASSOCIATED TELEPHONIES**

**a.** Aircraft operators must submit requests for ICAO three letter designators (3LD) and associated telephonies to FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) as follows:

**1.** Civil aircraft operators submit the request to ATO Aeronautical Information Services (AIS) via email ([callsigns@faa.gov](mailto:callsigns@faa.gov));

**2.** Governmental aircraft operators (Federal, State, local, tribal, and law enforcement aircraft) submit the request to ATO System Operations Security via email ([9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov](mailto:9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov))

**b.** Aircraft operators must submit the following information to the appropriate ATO office (listed above) for validation that the request meets FAA requirements:

1. The name and address of the aircraft operator or organization;
2. The type of aircraft operation or service provided by the company or organization;
3. If applicable, a copy of the civil aircraft operator's published or projected flight schedule, monthly flight history, and routes or areas of operation;
4. If applicable, a copy of the FAA certificate which authorizes the company's aircraft operations and states the 14 CFR part under which aircraft operations are to be conducted; and
5. At least 5 proposed ICAO 3LDs and associated telephonies, listed in their desired order;

c. If the request does not meet FAA requirements, the ATO office processing the request will provide an explanation to the applicant.

d. If the request meets FAA requirements, ATO AIS will direct the civil applicant to the ICAO 3LD website (<http://www.icao.int/3LD>) or ATO System Operations Security will coordinate directly with ICAO for governmental applicants;

**NOTE-**

*ICAO charges a fee for registration or modification of a civil ICAO 3LD and associated telephony. Civil applicants risk forfeiting this fee if they apply on the ICAO 3LD website prior to ATO validating their request for an ICAO 3LD and associated telephony.*

e. ICAO will notify the civil applicant when an ICAO 3LD and associated telephony is approved and assigned, or disapproved; System Operations Security will make this notification to governmental applicants;

**NOTE-**

*ICAO approval and assignment does not authorize the use of an ICAO 3LD and associated telephony. Only ATO can provide this authorization.*

f. The ATO office processing the request will notify the applicant when an ICAO 3LD and associated telephony is authorized for use.

g. Aircraft operators requesting to modify an existing 3LD and associated telephony must follow the same assignment process as described in this paragraph.

## **17-2-6. POLICY FOR SPECIAL CALL SIGNS**

Special call sign designators and associated telephonies may be assigned and authorized by FAA Air Traffic Organization (ATO) to enable special handling by ATC within the National Airspace System (NAS). ATO System Operations Security determines if special call sign designators and associated telephonies are advantageous and operationally appropriate for use in the NAS.

a. Special call sign designators and associated telephonies may be authorized for the following type of flight, operation, or event:

1. Governmental aircraft operations (Federal, state, local, tribal, and law enforcement);
2. Civil aircraft supporting emergencies, disasters, or law enforcement activities;
3. Civil aircraft that need special handling (e.g., commemorative flights, test purposes, etc.);
4. Civil aircraft participating in an organized event; or
5. Nationally recognized flight schools.

b. Special call sign designators can be used for filing flight plans and may be issued for a designated area of operation corresponding to the duration of an event or circumstances requiring special handling.

c. Special call sign designators are comprised of four to five characters. The special call sign designator combined with the flight number serves as the aircraft identification for the ATC system; must not exceed 7 total characters; and is used instead of the aircraft registration number for ATC security and operational purposes.

**d.** The special call sign designator, when pronounced, is normally the telephony unless a unique telephony is assigned by the ATO office processing the request.

**e.** Pilots are required to use standard identification procedures (i.e., aircraft registration number) when operating outside of the special call sign authorization.

**f.** Special call sign designators and associated telephonies cannot be used by third parties unless permission is explicitly granted through a security agreement with ATO System Operations Security.

#### **17-2-7. ASSIGNMENT OF SPECIAL CALL SIGNS**

**a.** Aircraft operators must make requests for special call sign designators and associated telephonies to ATO System Operations Security via email ([9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov](mailto:9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov)).

**b.** Aircraft operators must submit the following information for validation that the request meets FAA requirements:

1. Type of flight, operation, or event;
2. Aircraft type and number of aircraft participating;
3. Purpose and description of flight, operation, or event;
4. Routes or areas of flight, operation, or event; and
5. Duration of flight, operation, or event.

**c.** If ATO System Operations Security determines the request does not meet FAA requirements, an explanation will be provided to the applicant.

**d.** If the FAA requirements are met, governmental requests will be processed by ATO System Operations Security and civil requests will be processed by ATO Aeronautical Information Services (AIS) ([callsigns@faa.gov](mailto:callsigns@faa.gov)).

**e.** The ATO office processing the request will approve, administer final assignment, and notify the applicant when the special call sign designator and associated telephony is authorized for use.

#### **17-2-8. POLICY FOR LOCAL CALL SIGNS**

**a.** Aircraft operators must submit requests for local call sign designators and associated telephonies to the appropriate local FAA air traffic control (ATC) facility.

**b.** The local ATC facility will provide the FAA requirements for requesting local call sign designators and associated telephonies, in accordance with FAA Order 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration (paragraph 4-4-2, Use of Aircraft Call Signs).

#### **17-2-9. USE OF AUTHORIZED CALL SIGNS (ICAO 3LD, SPECIAL, AND LOCAL)**

##### **a. Aircraft Identification.**

The proper use of authorized call signs and telephonies is essential to ensuring the safety and security of the National Airspace System (NAS) by providing distinct aircraft identification for ATC. ATC identifies each of these aircraft within the NAS as follows:

1. When the call sign designator is combined with a flight number to make up the aircraft identification; and
2. When the telephony, in conjunction with the flight number, is used as the aircraft identification for radio communications with ATC.

##### **b. Use of Authorized Call Signs.**

To ensure proper aircraft identification for ATC, authorized call signs must meet the following requirements for use in the NAS:

1. The combination of call sign designator and flight number must not exceed 7 alpha-numeric characters;

2. To avoid similar or same call sign confusion, the call sign designator letters must immediately be followed in sequence only by the numerals of the flight number;

3. No additional letters of the alphabet are permitted after the call sign designator (except in **b.4.** below);

**NOTE-**

1. *Examples of acceptable call sign designators with flight number are: MDSTRI, RDDDL172, ABX9I, and SWA2604.*

2. *Examples of unacceptable call sign designators with flight number are: RDDDL1720, NEWS42G, BKA16CH, and LBQ17523.*

4. For operational purposes, Part 121 and Part 135 scheduled aircraft operators may use a letter as the final character of the aircraft identification as long as it is preceded by a numeral (i.e., AAL351A);

5. The aircraft registration number must be listed in the Remarks section of the filed flight plan when an authorized ICAO 3LD, special call sign designator, or local call sign designator is used.

**c. Use of Authorized Telephonies.**

Telephonies are used, instead of phonetically pronouncing the call sign designator, for aircraft identification purposes and to expedite radio communication with ATC. To ensure proper aircraft identification for ATC, authorized telephonies must meet the following requirements for use in the NAS:

1. To avoid confusion of similar sounding call signs, the telephony must be distinct and dissimilar from other telephonies listed in FAA Order 7340.2, *Contractions*. The telephony should also incorporate the following characteristics:

(a) Ideally, the telephony should reflect a correlation between the call sign designator and the name of the aircraft operating agency or its function.

(b) To reduce potential for miscommunication with ATC, the telephony should be easy to pronounce in English, comprised of 1 or 2 words, and consist of two or three syllables.

2. An ICAO 3LD must not be used in phonetic form as the telephony. However, existing telephonies which violate this rule will remain in effect (e.g., UPS).

3. The aircraft operator must include a new or changed telephony in the “Remarks” section of their flight plans for at least 60 days following the effective date of the new telephony.

**d. ATC Responsibilities.**

In accordance with FAA Order 7110.65, the abbreviation of FAA authorized call signs is not permitted; and similar-sounding call signs must be reported.

**REFERENCE-**

*FAA Order 7110.65, Air Traffic Control, paragraph 2-4-9.a., Abbreviated Transmissions*

*FAA Order 7110.65, Air Traffic Control, paragraph 2-4-15.b., Emphasis for Clarity*

**17-2-10. RESOLUTION OF AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION PROBLEMS**

a. ATC facilities are responsible for taking the appropriate actions to resolve reports of occurrences involving aircraft identification problems according to FAA Order 7210.3.

**REFERENCE-**

*FAA Order 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration, paragraph 2-1-13, Aircraft Identification Problems*

b. Aircraft operators should report occurrences of aircraft identification problems, such as similar-sounding or duplicate call signs, to the ATC facility where the occurrence took place.

**17-2-11. REVISION OR CANCELLATION OF ICAO 3LD OR SPECIAL CALL SIGNS**

In the interests of air traffic management (ATM) security and safety, the ATO reserves the right to revise, or cancel the assignment of any call sign designator and/or associated telephony, particularly in the event of unauthorized use or confusion. Aircraft operators should notify ATO System Operations Security via email ([9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov](mailto:9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov)) when an ICAO three letter designator (3LD) or a special call sign is no longer

required. Lack of use for three years or more may also result in cancellation of an ICAO 3LD and associated telephony.

**17-2-12. AERONAUTICAL FIXED TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK (AFTN)**

The Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN) system uses ICAO three letter designators (3LD) for identification, communication, and billing purposes. The AFTN system is an integrated, international system of aeronautical communications networks. The AFTN system provides the exchange of messages and flight plans between aeronautical and fixed stations within the network. See ICAO document Annex 10 for information concerning AFTN.

**17-2-13. EFFECTIVE DATE AND PUBLICATION**

The ATO office processing the request notifies the affected FAA facilities when designators and associated telephonies will be published in FAA Order 7110.67, Air Traffic Management Security for Special Activities, and FAA Order 7340.2, Contractions.

**7. Distribution.** This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: Air Traffic Services, Mission Support, and System Operations; the Office of ATO Safety and Technical Training; the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service; the William J. Hughes Technical Center; and the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center; and Flight Standards Services.

**8. Background.** In 2015, ICAO changed the approval process for requesting and obtaining ICAO three letter designators and associated telephonies. These changes accelerated a review of all published ATO procedures for assignment and authorization of call signs and associated telephonies, including U.S. special call signs and local call signs. An update was deemed necessary to bring procedures in line with changed and current practices.

**9. Related Publications.**

FAA Order 7340.2, *Contractions*

FAA Advisory Circular 120-26, *ICAO Aircraft Company Three-Letter Identifier and/or Telephony Designator Assignments and U.S. Special Telephony/Call Signs*

ICAO Document 8585, *Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities, and Services*



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Date Signed