

ORDER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

SW 7210.18A

SOUTHWEST REGION

3/16/92

SUBJ: PUBLICIZING FACILITY AUTOMATION OUTAGES

1. PURPOSE. This order updates procedures for publicizing en route air traffic facility automation outages.

2. DISTRIBUTION. This order is distributed to the branch level of the Air Traffic/Airway Facilities Divisions and to all Air Traffic ARTCC's and Airway Facilities ARTCC sectors in the Southwest Region.

3. CANCELLATION. Order ^{SW}7210.18, Publicizing Facility Automation Outages, dated August 10, 1982, is canceled.

4. BACKGROUND. In the interest of providing timely, accurate information on unscheduled computer outages to the general public, it is necessary that procedures be established to notify the media of all newsworthy, unscheduled en route automation outages which require switching to the backup system(s).

5. ACTION.

a. When an unscheduled automation outage occurs, the Airway Facilities sector manager or on-duty representative shall provide the Air Traffic manager with the following: time off, time restored, cause of outage, action taken to restore computer, and outage duration.

b. After determining that the outage is newsworthy, the Air Traffic manager, shall notify:

* (1) The Airway Facilities sector manager or on-duty representative of the decision to notify the media. *

(2) The regional Public Affairs Office.

(3) The Air Traffic Division.

(4) The media (using the format in Appendix 1, Sample News Release).

c. After administrative hours, the regional Communications Control Center shall be notified.

* d. The Airway Facilities sector manager or on-duty representative shall advise the Airway Facilities Division of the decision to publicize the computer outage and provide the data furnished to the Air Traffic manager as outlined in paragraph 5a. *

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Initiated By: ASW-540

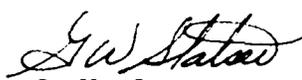
* 6. MISCELLANEOUS.

a. Air Traffic managers and Airway Facilities sector managers shall develop specific procedures within the guidelines of this order for timely notification of the media when an unscheduled automation outage occurs. The process developed at each ARTCC should stress promptness and provide essential information, for example:

- (1) Cause of outage.
- (2) How and when it was corrected.
- (3) The continued safety of operations during the degraded phase.

b. Records shall be kept of all contact with the media.


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APPENDIX 1. SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE* A. RADAR DATA PROCESSING (RDP) FAILURE.

The automated portion of the Air Traffic Control System at the _____ Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) experienced a _____ minute outage yesterday (DATE) _____, and (TIME) _____. There were no reported delays to aircraft. The suspected cause of the outage was within the computer system, one of the largest and most complex computers in the world.

The _____ ARTCC computer system is backed up by a Direct Access Radar Channel (DARC) radar system as are all air traffic en route control computer systems. When the computer failed last night, the controllers reverted to the backup mode in accordance with established procedures. They normally do not use the DARC system except during scheduled shutdowns of the automated system. All procedures were followed correctly and there was no derogation of safety during the outage and recovery, which is due to adequate contingency planning and training for all concerned personnel. The DARC radar system utilizes a smaller computer but lacks some of the enhancements available with the normal computer system.

b. RDP AND DARC FAILURE.

The automated portion of the Air Traffic Control System at the _____ ARTCC experienced a _____ minute outage yesterday (DATE) _____, and (TIME) _____. There were no reported delays to aircraft. The suspected cause of the outage was within the computer system, one of the largest and most complex computers in the world.

The _____ ARTCC computer system is normally backed up by a DARC radar system, as are all air traffic en route computer systems. The DARC system provides some, but not all functions of the RDP system and uses some of the common components of the RDP system; i.e., common digitizer at the radar sites, etc.

The DARC system, in this instance, also failed to provide the necessary input to allow controllers to use a "narrowband" or automated system. There is, however, a third backup system "manual separation" that was in use for many years before the advent of the automated systems and this was used during the recent failure. This system was routinely used prior to radar and automation, and controllers still receive training in its use to be prepared for a failure of this type.

All procedures were followed correctly and there was no derogation of safety during the outage and recovery, which was due to adequate contingency planning and training for all concerned personnel.

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