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

ORDER
JO 7232.5G

Effective Date:
June 13, 2008

SUBJ: Changing Operating Hours for Terminal Facilities

1. Purpose of This Order. This order establishes criteria and provides guidance for selecting terminal airport traffic control facilities for reducing or increasing hours of operation.

2. Audience. This directive applies to the Terminal Services organization and all associated air traffic control facilities.

3. Where Can I Find This Order? This order is available on the MyFAA employee Web site at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/.

4. Cancellation. This order cancels Federal Aviation Administration Order (FAAO) 7232.5F, Reduced or Increased Operating Hours for Airport Traffic Control Towers/Approach Control Facilities, effective August 13, 1990.

5. Criteria.

a. Reduction in Hours of Operation. A facility is a candidate for reduced operating hours when its average hourly operations are 4 or fewer over a representative 90-day period. If the facility is operating 24 hours daily and a reduction is proposed, the average of 4 or fewer operations an hour should be for 5 or more consecutive hours over the 90-day representative period. Consider towers and approach control facilities individually. The existence of radar does not limit consideration. The hours of radar service need not match with the hours of tower service.

b. Increase in Hours of Operation. A facility is a candidate for increased operating hours when the traffic at the airport during the time the facility is closed averages more than 4 operations an hour over a representative 90-day period or special operational or user requirements warrant increasing the operating hours. Operating hours can be increased in any increment (a half hour or one or more hours). Consider towers and approach control facilities individually. The existence of radar does not limit consideration. The hours of radar service need not match with the hours of tower service.

c. Seasonal Hours of Operation. Facilities that have seasonal variances in operations will be evaluated during the peak and nonpeak operational seasons.

d. Service Hours. Occasionally, early opening or late closing of the facility may be necessary to accommodate special circumstances. Handle these circumstances following the guidance contained in FAAO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration.

6. Requirements.

a. Traffic Survey. Conduct a survey of hourly traffic operations for at least a representative 90-day period in each facility with low-density traffic periods or with apparent increases in operations during the hours the facility is closed. Calculate the hourly average. If the hourly average meets the criteria in

paragraph 5 for reduced or increased operating hours, proceed with other actions to determine whether the operating hours should be reduced, increased, or retained. If the hourly average does not meet the criteria for a change in hours during the initial survey, make annual spot checks to determine if operations have changed sufficiently to warrant further survey and consideration.

b. Operational Considerations. In selecting facilities for reduced hours of operation, consider the following:

(1) Type of Operations. Determine the impact of the proposed change in operating hours on the types of operations to be conducted. Consider the type of aircraft operating during that period, general aviation activities, and any proposed or projected changes in scheduled commercial or cargo service provided at the airport.

(2) Weather Observations. Provide for weather observations including, but not limited to, automated reporting sources, runway visibility value and runway visual range where required, and an altimeter setting source.

(3) Airport Emergencies. Provide for notification of emergency units where such notification has been the responsibility of the tower. This should be included in a letter of agreement.

(4) Military Operations. Provide for support of contingencies, exercises, readiness inspections, periodic night flying, special military operations, etc.

(5) Provisions for Continued Instrument Flight Rules Air Traffic Control Services. Identify which facilities are capable of providing service and determine radar/radio coverage available, communications interface requirements, etc.

(6) Airspace Classification. Determine potential impact on airspace classification and associated services. Coordinate with the service center System Support Group to ensure that any needed rulemaking is initiated. See criteria contained in FAAO 7400.2, Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters, and prepare an airspace study.

(7) Airport Lighting. See FAAO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration, Chapter 10, Section 6, Airport Lighting.

(8) Approach and Takeoff Minimums.

(a) Determine impact to approach and takeoff minimums.

(b) Determine impact of provisions made for airport lighting controls and altimeter source. An unmanned tower, in itself, will not require raising instrument approach minimums. However, the intensity setting of an approach light system or the use of an alternate altimeter source during the period a tower is unmanned may require an increase in approach minimums.

(9) Determine navigational aids (NAVAID) monitoring arrangement.

(10) Servicing Security Element. Provide for changes that may be required in the physical security configuration and planning for the tower and associated NAVAIDs.

(11) Airport Design Criteria and Certification. Determine potential impact with airport design criteria and certification requirements.

(12) Contingency Plans. Determine potential impact on continuity of service.

(13) Impacted Services. Determine potential impacts on services provided to other airports and facilities.

(14) Impact on Other Terminal Facilities and other Service Units. Determine potential impacts on the services provided by other terminal facilities and other service units.

(15) Personnel.

(a) Determine the impact on employment levels and identify staffing requirements.

(b) If reduced hours result in excess staffing, develop a plan for placement of personnel that permits maximum continuity of employment with minimum dislocation and individual hardship. Coordinate with the service center Administrative Services Group and regional Human Resource Management Division for appropriate actions. If increased operating hours cannot be accomplished within existing budgetary and staffing resources, initiate appropriate budgetary requests through the service area director.

c. Coordination.

(1) Determine the impact a reduction or increase in operating hours would have on the local community by early informal coordination with airport users, community leaders, and airport managers.

(2) Coordinate planning with the Director of Terminal Operations, affected air traffic facilities (e.g., terminal radar approach control facilities or air route traffic control centers), local Technical Operations, System Operations, Airports Division, Flight Standards, Flight Services, Runway Safety Office, service center System Support Group, the appropriate military liaison, and other Government agencies, as appropriate.

(3) Coordinate with representatives of the servicing security element to determine the impact an increase or decrease in operating hours would have on physical security risk and vulnerability factors pertaining to the air traffic facility and its environment.

d. Assessment.

(1) Reduction in Hours.

(a) Assess the degree of restriction or inconvenience imposed on the aviation community.

(b) Determine if the annual savings in staffing and facility operation or other benefits resulting from the reduced hours of operation exceed the annual cost of the actions (equipment changes, communications interface, training of controllers in other facilities, etc.) required to provide services to users.

(2) Increase in Hours.

(a) Assess the degree of improvement or convenience that will be provided to the aviation community.

(b) Determine if the increased annual costs in staffing and facility operation resulting from the increased hours of operation can be accomplished within regional resources, and if the benefits of increased service provided to the users are cost effective and/or meet operational requirements and commitments.

7. Background.

a. To enhance the agency's management of limited staffing resources, terminal facility and service area management must carefully assess the costs and benefits of sustaining facility operations during periods of low volume air traffic operations. Staffing savings may be achieved by reducing the operating hours of facilities that do not have sufficient air traffic activity to warrant air traffic control services during late evening and early morning hour periods. More importantly, available resources may

be realigned for more effective use during other periods or at other locations to support higher density operations. In some facilities, operating hours may be reduced with little or no inconvenience to users and no adverse impact on safety of operations.

b. Additionally, facility and service area management must carefully assess and review facility operations continually to ensure changing operational requirements and user needs are being met. An assessment of the costs and benefits of increasing facility operations to meet changing requirements and user demand is necessary to ensure agency resources are aligned and used efficiently and effectively.

c. Before selecting a facility for reduced or increased hours, the air traffic service area must ensure requirements in paragraph 6 are completed and a staff study is prepared as prescribed in paragraph 8.

8. Staff Study. Prepare a detailed staff study addressing the factors necessary for effective evaluation, analysis, and decisionmaking to reduce or retain the facility operating hours or to increase operating hours where additional funding and staffing are required to accomplish the requested action. As a minimum, the staff study should contain:

a. A concise statement of the issue.

b. General information (include as background in the body of the study or as an attachment).

c. A brief description of the air traffic facility and services provided.

d. User operations during the hours in question (scheduled air carriers, air taxi/commuters, scheduled cargo flights, medical flights, military operations, etc.) and type of aircraft involved.

e. Annual traffic operations (instrument and total; airport operations should be shown by category).

f. Airport facilities (runways, NAVAIDs, etc.).

g. Other Air Traffic Organization (ATO) facilities (for example, Technical Operations, System Operations, Terminal, and En Route and Oceanic) affected by the change.

h. Results of the 90-day traffic survey.

i. Other background information as applicable (projected traffic increases/decreases, etc., as appropriate).

j. Discussion, results, and arrangements made in consideration of each of the items addressed under Requirements, paragraph 6. Include all rulemaking documents and actions related to airspace designation.

k. A cost/benefit analysis detailing life-cycle costs for equipment, utility costs, and staffing costs associated with the proposal.

l. A description of each alternative considered and an evaluation of each.

m. A statement of the recommended alternatives and why a specific alternative was chosen.

n. Changing Operating Hours for Terminal Facilities Checklist (appendix A) and the Safety Risk Management Document (SRMD), included as appendices to the staff study.

9. Approval Authority.

a. A reduction of 4 hours or more, or a change in operating hours that results in a decrease in personnel, is a significant change requiring the Administrator’s approval and notification to the Secretary of Transportation to fulfill this requirement. Send a copy of the staff study and the SRMD, as

enclosures to a cover letter, from the Director of Terminal Operations to the Chief Operating Officer through the Vice President, Terminal Services, the Vice President, System Operations Services, and, if the reduction in hours involves a transfer of terminal airspace to an en route facility, the Vice President, En Route and Oceanic Services. Summarize the proposal in the cover letter. Allow at least 120 days before the proposed effective date for headquarters internal and interagency coordination and approval, mail delivery, advance public announcement, etc.

b. If an en route service area acquires the terminal airspace, that en route service area and the terminal service area must both approve the staff study and the SRMD, and en route must accept the risk.

c. The approved staff study and the SRMD will be included, as attachments to the cover letter, from the air traffic manager to the Director of Operations through the service area district manager.

d. Directors of Terminal Operations are authorized to increase operating hours or make minor reductions (fewer than 4 hours) within budgetary and staffing limitations. These actions are not considered to be a significant change; thus, the Administrator's approval and notification of the Secretary are not required. Seasonal changes in operating hours (fewer than 4 hours) may also be made without advance notice and approval as these are also not considered significant changes. The staff study will be approved by the service area before sending it and the SRMD as enclosures to a cover letter from the air traffic manager to the Director of Operations through the service area district manager.

e. An increase in hours of operation that cannot be accomplished within existing budgetary and staffing limitations requires approval of the Vice President, Terminal Services. Forward a copy of the staff study and the SRMD at least 120 days before the proposed implementation.

f. If the proposed reduction or increase in hours of operation does not require Washington headquarters approval, no waiting period is required before publicly announcing and proceeding with the reduction or increase in operating hours, after receiving approval from the Director of Operations.

g. If the proposed increase in hours of operation requires only funding or staffing approval, there is no waiting period once approval from the Vice President, Terminal Services is received before publicly announcing and proceeding with the increase in operating hours.

10. Implementation.

a. If the proposed reduction in hours of operation requires the Administrator's approval, wait 10 business days after the date of the Administrator’s notification to the Secretary before publicly announcing the change. The Administrator's letter of approval will contain the date of notification to the Secretary.

b. If the proposed reduction or increase in hours of operation does not require Washington headquarters approval, no waiting period is required before publicly announcing and proceeding with the reduction or increase in operating hours, after receiving approval from the Director of Operations.

c. If the proposed reduction or increase in hours of operation requires a rulemaking action, ensure the rulemaking action is complete before implementation.

d. If the proposed increase in hours of operation requires only funding or staffing approval, there is no waiting period once approval from the Vice President, Terminal Services is received before publicly announcing and proceeding with the increase in operating hours.

e. The Director of Operations will notify the appropriate Regional Administrators about the proposed change in hours of operation. Provisions will be made for notifying local and Federal officials

(Members of Congress, military units, airport authorities, etc.). A public announcement of the change must be made at least 15 days before the effective date.

11. **Distribution**. This directive is distributed to the following ATO service units: Acquisition and Business, Finance, Operations Planning, Terminal, Safety, System Operations, En Route and Oceanic, and Technical Operations Services; service center offices; the William J. Hughes Technical Center; the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center; all terminal air traffic control facilities; and the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service.

Nancy B Kalinowski

Nancy B. Kalinowski
Vice President, System Operations Services
Air Traffic Organization

4-28-08
Date Signed

Appendix A – Changing Operating Hours for Terminal Facilities Checklist

No.	Item			Date Completed
1.	**Facility Level**			
	Conduct a traffic survey of hourly traffic operations for a representative 90-day period and compute an hourly average for each hour (average hourly operations are four or less operations).			
2.	**Director, Terminal Operations**			
	a.	Conduct preliminary coordination, as appropriate, and forward a decision to the facility whether it can proceed with a reduction in hours.		
		(1)	ATO - Terminal/En Route Vice President	
		(2)	Congressional Delegation	
		(3)	Regional FAA Administrators	
		(4)	State Airport Directors	
		(5)	Affected Regional Department of Defense and Homeland Security	
	b.	Establish a detailed local agreement, such as a letter of agreement, before the implementation of the reduction of hours between the affected air traffic (terminal/en route) facilities. Coordination of airspace, letters of agreement, staffing, training, and any other related issues should be addressed.		
3.	**Facility Level**			
	a.	Communicate to all affected stakeholders the intent to reduce the operating hours.		
		(1)	Airport users	
		(2)	Community leaders	
		(3)	Airport manager	
		(4)	Adjacent air traffic facilities	
		(5)	Airports Division	
		(6)	Technical Operations	
		(7)	Flight Standards	
		(8)	Adjacent FAA regions	
		(9)	Flight service stations or flight service station contract manager	
		(10)	Law enforcement (for physical security)	
		(11)	Other government agencies	
	b.	Analyze operational impacts and issues of proposed hourly reduction on airport operational activities to include:		
		(1)	Determine the impact on the type of operations to be conducted, i.e., general aviation, air taxi, air carrier, and cargo.	
		(2)	Determine who would provide for weather observations including Runway Visual Range (RVR) and Runway Visibility Value (RVV) where required and altimeter setting source.	

			(a)	Terminal facilities with an AWOS/ASOS: For AWOS/ASOS information not accessible via a dedicated frequency, incorporate ground-to-air broadcast capability (i.e., ASOS-ATIS interface)	
			(b)	En route facilities make provisions to ensure the en route controller will have access to the official hourly observation so that it can be disseminated if required.	
	c.	If emergency notification was the tower responsibly, provide for alternative notification method including a new letter of agreement.			
	d.	Provide alternatives for support of military or medical contingency operations.			
	e.	Designate the facility that will provide IFR air traffic control services and determine adequate availability of radar and communications as necessary.			
		(1)	When possible remote the radar feed. (Incorporate additional map depictions of MVA changes to take advantage of the radar feed.) or Ensure mixture of radar and nonradar when remote feed is not feasible and ensure necessary training is provided.		
		(2)	Remote terminal frequencies to the receiving site whenever possible or establish Remote Communications Air/Ground (RCAG) outlet.		
	f.	Determine impact to the surface area and affect on criteria in FAA Order 7400.2, Procedures for Handling Airspace Matters, and coordinate with the Service Center System Support Group for rulemaking actions.			
	g.	Determine alternative to provide airport lighting consistent with FAA Order 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration (i.e., installation of Pilot Controlled Lighting, etc.).			
	h.	Coordinate with the Flight Procedures Office to determine impacts to approach minimums.			
		(1)	Coordinate the impact to approach minimums with all affected stakeholders, e.g., local Flight Standards, Technical Operations, users, airport owner/operator, etc.		
		(2)	Make provisions for airport lighting and altimeter source.		
		(3)	Determine navigational aid monitoring responsibilities.		
		(4)	Determine adjustments to straight-in approach minimums.		
	i.	Provide for needed changes to physical security responsibilities.			
	j.	Determine impact on employee levels.			
	k.	Develop high fidelity simulator training with voice recognition or other means of training to ensure controller proficiency is maintained.			
	l.	Complete staff study addressing all factors necessary to execute decision. In addition to this checklist, ensure the staff study includes the following elements:			
		(1)	A concise statement of issue.		
		(2)	General overview to include:		
			(a)	Brief description of facility and services provided.	
			(b)	User operations during hours in question (scheduled air carriers, air taxi/commuters, scheduled cargo flights, medical flights, military operations, etc.) and type of aircraft involved.	
			(c)	Annual operations shown by category.	
			(d)	Airport facilities, runways, navigational aids, etc.	

			(e)	Other air traffic facilities serving the airport, TRACON, ARTCC, and LMAFSS.	
			(f)	Results of 90-day air traffic survey.	
			(g)	Other background information as applicable (projected traffic increases/decreases, etc.).	
		(3)		Discussion, results, and arrangements made in consideration of each item addressed under requirements.	
		(4)		Cost estimates (operations and facilities and equipment) for equipment.	
		(5)		Staffing savings, if any.	
		(6)		A concise statement of the recommended course or courses of action based upon findings of the study.	
		(7)		Provide Safety Risk Management Document (SRMD) as needed, National SRMD or Local SRMD	
4.	**Headquarters**				
		Validate Assessment.			
		(1)		The degree of restriction or inconvenience imposed on aviation community.	
		(2)		Annual savings for staffing, equipment, and operational costs.	
		(3)		Cost of changes required to configure facility for reduction in hours and to maintain appropriate level of service to users (e.g., equipment, communications, etc.).	
		(4)		Safety risk management analysis.	