

CHANGE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
National Policy

JO 7210.78
CHG 1

Effective Date:
07/25/2018

SUBJ: JO 7210.78 FAA Contract Tower (FCT) New Start and Replacement Tower Process

- 1. Purpose.** This change includes the Minimum Equipment and Facilities List (MEL) into the FAA Contract Tower (FCT) New Start and Replacement Tower Process.
- 2. Audience.** This order applies to Airport Sponsors that are requesting air traffic control services through the FCT Program, all Air Traffic Organization (ATO) personnel, and anyone using ATO directives.
- 3. Where I can find this order.** This order is available on the FAA Web site at http://faa.gov/air_traffic/publications and on the MyFAA employee website at http://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/. Audience
- 4. Explanation of Changes.** This change adds the MEL as an appendix into FAA JO 7210.78, FAA Contract Tower (FCT) New Start and Replacement Tower Process.

PAGE CHANGE CONTROL CHART

Remove	Dated	Insert Pages	Dated
2	11/29/2017	2	7/25/2018
		Appendix A	7/25/2018

- 5. Disposition of Transmittal.** Retain this transmittal sheet until the directive is replaced by a new directive.
- 6. Distribution.** This order is distributed to all Washington Headquarters and Service Area ATO offices, the Office of Security and Hazardous Materials Safety (ASH), Office of Aviation Policy and Plans (APL), Office of Airports (ARP), Office of Aviation Safety (AVS), Acquisitions and Contracting (AAQ), FAA Academy (AMA), Office of Finance and Management (AFN), Regions and Property Operations (ARO) and all Regional Offices, to all Air Traffic Services and Technical Operations field offices with a standard distribution, and to all FCT locations.



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c. Estimated Tower Completion Date. The date the Airport Sponsor expects the construction of the air traffic control tower to be complete. This includes building construction, the issuance of all occupancy permits, the installation of required air traffic control equipment, and that all systems (electrical, plumbing, etc.) are working properly. This date is used to develop a timeline for conducting the air traffic study, operational inspections, and staffing analysis.

d. FAA Contract Tower (FCT). An air traffic control tower providing ATC services under contract with FAA, staffed by contracted air traffic control specialists.

e. FCT Operational Date. The date the vendor will begin providing ATC service in accordance with the FCT contract and FAA directives.

f. FCT Program Entrance Date. A new tower is considered to be “in the FCT Program” on the date the Contracting Officer (CO) signs the Tower Operating Agreement (TOA). After this date, the CO can authorize the vendor to staff the facility.

g. FCT Program Implementation Manager (FCT PIM). The FCT PIM is the Service Center point of contact (POC) responsible for coordinating issues affecting the FCT Program.

h. FCT Vendor (Vendor). The person(s), company, state or local organization/authority under contractual agreement to provide air traffic control service through the FCT program.

i. Minimum Equipment List (MEL). The MEL identifies those items that are required for any “new start” or existing tower seeking acceptance into the FCT Program (see Appendix A).

j. New Start. Any air traffic control tower which has been proposed, is currently under construction, or has been completed but has not been accepted as a participant in the FCT Program.

k. Non-Federal Control Tower (NFCT). An air traffic control tower that is not staffed by FAA or FAA contracted controllers. An NFCT is not associated with the FCT Program or funded by the FAA.

l. Phases. The four phases and activities outlining the process for the Airport Sponsor to become a member of the FCT program are as follows:

1) **Phase 1: Interest Phase** - The Airport Sponsor has expressed interest in the FCT Program but has not submitted an application package.

2) **Phase 2: Applicant Phase** - The Airport Sponsor has submitted a completed application package with all of the required supporting documentation.

3) **Phase 3: Candidate Phase** - The Airport Sponsor has received a Benefit to Cost Ratio (B/C) of 1.0 or greater.

Appendix A. FAA Contract Tower Minimum Equipment And Facilities List

The FAA Contract Tower (FCT) Minimum Equipment and Facilities List (MEL) identifies those items that are required for any “new start” or existing non-Federal tower seeking acceptance into the FCT program. Furthermore, the MEL applies to any new control tower that will replace an existing tower (replacement tower) that is already a participant in the FCT program. All FCTs are expected to be fully compliant with this MEL. Existing towers that are already participants in the FCT program and do not meet the requirements of this MEL must develop an action plan that addresses and resolves the deficiencies within 5 years. For those locations that do not have the structural capacity to meet the infrastructure requirements, a waiver request must be submitted.

Exclusion of any piece of equipment from the FCT MEL should not be considered as justification for removal, decommissioning, or failure to maintain/replace existing equipment. Installation or removal/decommissioning of equipment which interfaces with the National Airspace System requires a Safety Management System (SMS) review. Additional equipment may be required based upon actual or anticipated operations. All items on this list must be calibrated properly and maintained in good working condition.

1. Communications Equipment.

a. Voice switch communication equipment, with direct access line to controlling instrument flight rules facility, capable of radio and telephone ATC communication. This must include the capability of headset use and instructor/student override capabilities.

b. One headset per controller and one handset per position with appropriate spares.

c. Very High Frequency (VHF) radios, as required, to support level of traffic; i.e., Local Control, Ground Control, Automatic Terminal Information Service, Clearance Delivery, and Emergency; one transmitter and one receiver for each frequency. Handheld radios are not authorized as primary units.

d. Tunable emergency transceiver with backup power supply (to provide backup VHF communication).

e. A multi-channel, multi-line digital voice recorder system with a remote alarm, for continuous unattended recording of each position used for receiving/transmitting ATC clearances and ATIS. It must meet the requirements of FAA Orders JO 7210.3 and JO 8020.16.

f. An administrative telephone line with long distance capability and handsets in the operating and administrative quarters. To support a single person on duty, contingency plan and emergency operations, the administrative line must be available in both the office and tower cab environment.

g. Telecommunication requirements to sustain high speed internet communication, to include the following:

- 1) FTI Mission Support connection and Router;

2) Local Area Network consisting of a network switch, an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), a rack with patch panel, and network cabling to the wall jacks.

Note: Requires reimbursable agreement with FAA.

h. Alert system to notify airport emergency equipment operator.

i. Automatic Terminal Information Service (ATIS), (for towers with 50,000 or more annual operations).

j. ASOS Automatic Terminal Information Service (ATIS) Interface Unit (AAIU).

Note: Facilities equipped with an ATIS and an automated weather system with broadcast capability must be equipped with an FAA-approved interface switch which inhibits the automated system from broadcasting the weather while the FCT is open.

2. Weather Equipment.

a. Manual Limited Aviation Weather Reporting Stations (LAWRS) stations must possess the following primary weather reporting equipment in accordance with FAA Order JO 7900.5, JO 7210.3, and JO 7230.8:

1) Wind Measuring Equipment (Speed and Azimuth), must be visible from each operational position.

2) Altimeter (in accordance with FAA JO 7210.3 paragraph 2-10-3), must be visible from each operational position.

3) Temperature

4) Dew Point

b. Automated LAWRS stations must possess the following equipment to provide augmentation/backup of the automated weather system with SPECI capability in accordance with FAA Order JO 7900.5, JO 7210.3 and JO 7230.8:

1) Operator Interface Device (OID) located in the tower cab.

2) Wind Measuring Equipment (Speed and Azimuth), independent of the automated weather system, must be visible from each operational position.

3) Altimeter, independent of the automated weather system, must be visible from each operational position.

4) Temperature Equipment, independent of the automated weather system.

5) Dew Point Equipment, independent of the automated weather system.

3. Operations Floor Equipment:

- a. Two pair of operable binoculars (7x50 or greater).
- b. Signal Light Gun with a back-up power source.
- c. At least one digital 24-hour time source with hours-minutes-seconds display visible from operating positions.
- d. Manual or automated traffic counting device.
- e. Controller Chairs – safety issues within the controllers' work area require:
 - 1) Chairs must be Electro Static Discharge (ESD) compliant.
 - 2) Chairs must meet the high intensity use 24/7 standard.
 - 3) Chairs must have fully adjustable mechanisms that are easy and safe to manipulate.

4. Non-Operations Equipment. Appropriate non-operational space, furniture, and equipment must be provided, including:

- a. Lockable Air Traffic Manager's office with a locking file cabinet.
- b. Training/break room with appropriate desk, chairs, and table.
- c. Refrigerator.
- d. Microwave.
- e. Dish Sink.

5. Building Equipment/Specifications.

- a. Generator for any ATCT with an elevator.
- b. Airport lighting controls located in the tower cab, including on/off switch for rotating beacon.
- c. FAA-approved window shades for all tower cab windows. (Must not have any imperfections that would obstruct vision.)
- d. Position lighting with rheostat control for each operating position and tower cab administrative area.
- e. Restroom one floor below the tower cab.
- f. Floor covering must be ESD resistant.

Note: Other floor grounding apparatus may be necessary depending upon specifications of the electronic equipment installed.