ORDER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
NORTHWEST MOUNTAIN REGION

NM 7210.9A

8/26/98

SUBJ: QUALITY ASSURANCE ORDER

1. **PURPOSE**. This order prescribes the Quality Assurance policy in the Northwest Mountain Region. This policy requires quality assurance that establishes and demonstrates adherence to standards, prevention of errors/deviations, error-free performance, effective operational teamwork, communications, customer service with user surveys, and other proactive measures which ensure that national and regional quality assurance goals and objectives are consistently being met.

2. **DISTRIBUTION**. This order is distributed to branch level in the Air Traffic Division, Air Traffic Evaluations and Investigations Staff, AAT-20, and standard distribution to all Air Traffic field facilities within the Northwest Mountain Region.

3. **CANCELLATION**. NM Order 7210.9, Quality Assurance Order, dated July 2, 1998, is cancelled.

4. **EFFECTIVE DATE**. This order is effective October 1, 1998.

5. **EXPLANATION OF CHANGES**. This order has been corrected to include flight services per 100,000, as a factor in determining an occurrence percentage rate.

6. **BACKGROUND**. Quality assurance demands that individual, facility, and system performance consistently conforms to prescribed agency directives, standards, and requirements. Each operational requirement must be understood, valued, and treated equally in the course of daily performance, and must be applied during every operational transaction. Quality is assured only when individual, facility, and system performance conforms to the requirements prescribed in agency directives and policies.

7. **POLICY**. The Northwest Mountain Region Air Traffic Division and its field facilities are committed to providing error-free air traffic control services that adhere to agency directives, comply with prescribed standards, and ensure the safe, orderly, and expeditious handling of air traffic.

a. This policy requires all employees to consistently perform their duties and responsibilities in accordance with agency directives and standards, and to accept responsibility for maintaining the safest and highest levels of operational performance.

b. To ensure that air traffic services are error-free, each employee shall know, apply, and adhere to the appropriate requirements in the performance of her/his duties and responsibilities.

c. Our goal is to maintain an error-free operational environment that delivers safe, effective, and efficient air traffic control services to our customers.

d. Error-free means providing air-traffic services without operational errors and deviations, and in compliance with agency, regional, and facility directives, standards, procedures, and policies.

8. **OBJECTIVES**. To meet our goal, the Northwest Mountain Region and its field facilities have the following quality assurance objectives:

a. To identify commendable activities and efforts which enhance individual, facility, or system performance and service, and to ensure that they are promptly recognized and acknowledged.

b. To identify individual, facility, equipment, or system deficiencies which detract from the quality of air traffic service.

c. To promptly correct individual, facility, equipment, or system deficiencies which detract from the quality of air traffic service, through counseling, training, procedural changes, and, when appropriate, disciplinary actions.

d. To provide follow-up mechanisms that ensure specific actions taken have corrected identified deficiencies or problems.

e. To provide management controls that ensure identified deficiencies and problems do not continue or recur.

f. To assure that identified successes are shared throughout the system.

9. **RESPONSIBILITIES**.

a. Regional.

(1) The Regional Air Traffic Division Manager and the Regional Quality Assurance Staff shall provide the direction, guidance, and assistance required to ensure that agency directives, standards, and policies are being consistently adhered to, and that quality assurance goals and objectives are being achieved.

(2) The Regional Air Traffic Division Manager shall determine when facility on-site reviews are needed.

NOTE: Periodically, the Regional Quality Assurance Staff may request to review facility documentation and cassette recordings associated with operational performance reviews, technical training, Performance Improvement Plans (PIP), remedial training, or operational error/deviation recertification training plans.

(3) The Regional Quality Assurance Staff shall conduct quarterly reviews of field facilities using the Analysis of Variance program (ANOVA), and will require investigations, reports of observed trends, and facility visits, as appropriate.

(4) The Regional Quality Assurance Staff shall provide the Air Traffic Managers a quarterly synopsis of the Quality Assurance Status Reports.

(5) The Regional Quality Assurance Staff shall provide operational error/deviation trend information each July 31 and December 31 annually for the Air Traffic Managers to use during their semi-annual operational shift assignments.

b. Facility.

(1) Air Traffic Managers are responsible for the application of this policy and shall provide support, guidance, and direction to facility personnel to promote the accomplishment of quality assurance objectives in facility operations.

(2) Air Traffic Managers shall initiate, develop, and/or utilize programs that promote and ensure effective controller performance, teamwork, and communications. The programs shall incorporate customer service/participation and feedback strategies; for example, user surveys and workshops, operation rain-check, or joint air traffic, flight standards, and user meetings.

(3) Air Traffic Managers shall develop and maintain a summary of operational errors/deviations causal factors and trends and incorporate them into classroom, simulated (DYSIM, TRACON-PRO, and ETG), and refresher training.

(4) Quarterly, Air Traffic Managers shall require that all facility personnel be briefed on facility operational errors/deviations, on national and facility operational error/deviation causal factors and trends, and on other national or regional quality assurance concerns.

(5) Air Traffic Managers shall provide a Quality Assurance Status Report (Appendix 1) to the Manager, Quality Assurance Staff, ANM-505, in accordance with paragraph 12 of this order. Where appropriate, this report shall be forwarded through the Hub Manager.

(6) During the months of January or February, and again during the months of August or September, Air Traffic Managers and Assistant Air Traffic Managers shall spend five consecutive workdays (a mixture of day and evening shifts) in the operating quarters monitoring the operation. The focus of the operational shift assignments is to observe for the operational error/deviation trends forwarded by the Regional Quality Assurance Staff.

(a) Notification of completion of the operational monitoring shifts shall be made via cc:Mail to the Manager, Quality Assurance Staff, ANM-505.

(b) A memorandum describing the observations of the operational quarters monitoring shifts shall be forwarded semi-annually to the Air Traffic Division Manager, no later than March 10 and October 10. If applicable, submissions shall be made through the Hub Manager; cc:Mail submissions with attached memorandum are preferable.

10. QUALITY ASSURANCE STATUS REPORT. This report shall address the following:

a. The operational condition level and occurrence percentage rate for the quarter being reported. Also, if necessary, the items addressed in the Quality Assurance Actions Brief.

b. The number of operational errors and deviations and the corrective/follow-up actions taken.

c. The number of operational performance reviews performed and the corrective/follow-up actions taken, if required.

d. The number of individual tape talks performed and the corrective/follow-up actions taken, if required.

e. A short synopsis of the results of comparing the causal factors from operational errors and deviations with performance deficiencies identified during operational performance reviews and tape talks.

f. A summary of acknowledged commendable activities and efforts, such as flight assists, controller saves, or superior performance.

11. OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS (OPR).

a. Operational Performance Reviews, previously known as Over-The-Shoulders, shall be conducted in accordance with paragraph 12 of this directive to measure controller performance for adherence to prescribed standards and procedures.

The OPR shall be documented in memorandum format and entered into the employee's training and proficiency records, FAA Form 3120-1, Section VI, Technical Appraisal. The supervisors shall discuss operational deficiencies with the employee and provide follow-up activities to ensure performance improvement and the elimination of the documented performance deficiencies.

b. Operational Performance Reviews should address separation, control judgment, operating methods and procedures, equipment knowledge, and coordination/communication areas. Training to correct documented performance deficiencies shall be in accordance with FAA Orders 3120.4, 7210.56, and 7210.3. The FAA Form 3120-1 entries shall reflect the OPR outcome as "Satisfactory," "Satisfactory - Needs Improvement," or "Unsatisfactory."

12. OPERATIONAL CONDITION (OPCON). The operational condition consists of comparing the facility's total airport operations, instrument operations, or flight services per 100,000, against the number of facility errors and deviations, which produces an occurrence percentage rate. Next, the occurrence percentage rate is used to determine a facility's Operational Condition (OPCON) Level of 1, 2, or 3. This OPCON strategy mandates that actions are taken based on a facility's measured level of operational performance regarding operational errors and deviations. Consequently, each OPCON Level requires that specific quality assurance activities be implemented.

This is a proactive quality assurance strategy that, when properly applied, gives facility management advance knowledge of what specific actions are required to ensure that quality assurance objectives are being met.

a. OPCON 1: 0.00 - 0.20 Occurrence Rate.

(1) Semi-annual operational performance reviews on each controller.

(2) Semi-annual individual or team tape talks.

(3) At least one random operational performance review, skill enhancement check, or tape talk for each supervisor annually.

(4) Quality Assurance Status Report to ANM-505 by September 30 annually.

b. OPCON 2: 0.21 - 0.35 Occurrence Rate. Take the following actions when reaching this operational level:

(1) Within 5 calendar days of reaching OPCON 2, the Facility Manager (and if appropriate, the Hub Manager) shall contact the Assistant Air Traffic Division Manager, ANM-501, to discuss a realignment of administrative and collateral duties to accommodate the operational priority.

(2) Within 10 administrative days, the Air Traffic Manager shall submit to the Regional Quality Assurance Staff, ANM-505, a Quality Assurance Actions Brief, detailing all actions to be taken and their expected completion dates. Where appropriate, this report shall be forwarded through the Hub Manager.

(3) Within 30 calendar days, the facility shall brief the Air Traffic Division Manager on the fiscal year-to-date operational errors/deviations, their causal factors, trends, and corrective actions.

(4) Within 45 calendar days, operations supervisors and their team members shall meet to discuss operational expectations, requirements, and follow-up/corrective actions that will be taken to ensure that controller performance is in accordance with prescribed standards and procedures.

(5) The facility shall conduct two (2) random reviews of tape talks and operational performance evaluations conducted by first-line supervisors per quarter.

Note: In Centers, this may be limited to the "Area(s)" directly responsible for a change in OPCON level.

(6) A Quality Assurance Status Report (Appendix 1) shall be submitted quarterly.

(7) The Air Traffic Manager and Assistant Air Traffic Manager shall spend five consecutive workdays (a mixture of day and evening shifts) in the operating quarters monitoring the operation quarterly.

c. OPCON 3: 0.36 - 0.50+ Occurrence Rate. Take the following actions when reaching this operational level. Two quarters of OPCON Level 3 performance requires a Regional Quality Assurance Team site visit.

(1) Within 5 calendar days of reaching OPCON 3, the Facility Manager (and if appropriate, the Hub manager) shall contact the Assistant Air Traffic Division Manager, ANM-501, to discuss a realignment of administrative and collateral duties to accommodate the operational priority.

(2) Within 10 calendar days, the Air Traffic Manager shall submit to the Air Traffic Division Manager, ANM-500, a Quality Assurance Actions Brief, detailing all actions to be taken and their expected completion dates. Where appropriate, this report shall be forwarded through the Hub Manager. This briefing may be in person.

(3) Within 30 calendar days, the facility shall brief the Air Traffic Division Manager on the operational errors/deviations that have occurred since the OPCON 2 call in, their causal factors, trends, and corrective actions.

(4) Within 30 calendar days, operations supervisors and their team members shall meet to discuss operational expectations, requirements, and follow-up/corrective actions that will be taken to ensure that controller performance is in accordance with prescribed standards and procedures.

(5) Quality assurance briefings are required twice per quarter for the next two quarters.

(6) Facility staff support specialist shall conduct a random review of tape talks and operational performance reviews conducted by first-line supervisors.

(7) A Quality Assurance Status Report (Appendix 1) shall be submitted monthly.

(8) The Air Traffic Manager and Assistant Air Traffic Manager shall spend one shift per week in the operating quarters monitoring the operation.

d. OPCON Review. After the second quarter in either OPCON 2 or 3, the facility shall review its operational performance by comparing the facility's total airport operations, instrument operations, or flight services per 100,000, for that particular quarter, against the number of facility errors/deviations. If the occurrence percentage rate for that second quarter falls into a lower OPCON Level, the facility, with the consent of the Air Traffic Division Manager, may proceed at the lower OPCON Level.

e. Quality Assurance Actions Brief. This report details the actions required when reaching OPCON 2 or 3, and includes the date when the level was reached, the occurrence percentage rate, the schedule of required activities with their expected completion dates, and any additional activities planned at the facility level.

Helen Fabian Parke
Manager, Air Traffic Division

QUALITY ASSURANCE STATUS REPORT

Date:_____

Facility: _____ FY Quarter: _____

OPCON Level: _____ Occurrence Percentage Rate: _____

Total # OE's for the Quarter: _____ Total # OD's for the Quarter: _____

Total # OE's for the FY: _____ Total # OD's for the FY: _____

Number of Operational Performance Reviews this Quarter: _____

Number of Tape Talks Conducted this Quarter: _____

NARRATIVE: (Corrective/follow-up actions, comparison synopsis, and commendable activities.)