

ORDER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

SOUTHWEST REGION

SW 7210.24

10/6/99

SUBJ: AIR TRAFFIC DIVISION PROCEDURES FOR READBACK/HEARBACK AWARENESS PROGRAM

1. **PURPOSE.** This order establishes a voluntary readback/hearback program to prevent operational errors in the Southwest Region that occur due to undetected incorrect pilot or controller readbacks. It is the intent of the Air Traffic Division to identify and reward employees who detect and correct erroneous pilot readbacks of air traffic control (ATC) clearances, thus enhancing safety.

2. **DISTRIBUTION.** This order is distributed to the branch level in the Air Traffic Division, supervisory level in terminals and en route facilities in the Southwest Region, the Regional Representative for National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), and AAT-20.

3. **BACKGROUND.** Incorrect receipt of an ATC clearance has historically been one of the most common causes of operational errors in the air traffic system. In many of these incidents the pilot has read back an incorrect clearance. Controller detection of the error at this point can prevent a serious situation from developing.

4. **PROCEDURES.** Each terminal hub and center manager, in conjunction with NATCA, will identify instances where personnel detect and correct erroneous readbacks of ATC clearances. These instances may be self-identified, observed by a co-worker, or turned in by supervisory personnel. Submission is voluntary, and data supplied will be used solely for the readback/hearback program. Instances that are deemed to be significant, according to the criteria below, will be forwarded to the Quality Assurance Staff, ASW-505, for consideration under this program. The awards will be considered on a quarterly basis. Submissions must be received no later than the last day of each quarter (October – December, January – March, April – June, July – September).

a. **Each terminal facility and center** may submit instances for consideration under this program. Each submission should include voice recordings of the clearance, readback, correction, and, if available, computer data depicting the traffic situation. Statements or narratives of the situation may be submitted to further document the occurrence. Terminal facilities will provide their submission through their Hub.

b. **Significance of each “save”** will be judged, by a selection committee, based on the following criteria (listed in order of priority):

(1) **Critically of the error** (pertaining to potential loss of safety/separation had the error not been detected).

(2) **Timeliness of controller actions.**

(3) **Difficulty of the circumstances** involved in detection of the error (i.e., frequency congestion, workload, equipment problems).

c. Recognition. A block of hours will be allocated for this effort under the time off award program. The selection committee will make their recommendation to the Air Traffic Division Manager, ASW-500.

d. Follow-up. ASW-505 will disseminate information, obtained under this program, to field facilities for use in increasing awareness on readback/hearback issues.

5. POINT OF CONTACT. For clarification contact the Quality Assurance Staff, ASW-505.

/s/ David P. Medina for
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