

TIMELINE OF ACTIONS SINCE DCA MIDAIR

Actions Taken at DCA

Nationwide Safety Actions

2025

January: Restricted helicopter traffic in the area over the Potomac River around Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) and stretching to Wilson Bridge.

February: Temporarily eliminated the use of visual separation between helicopters and fixed wing aircraft by DCA.

March: NTSB issued two Safety Recommendations to the FAA. We immediately addressed them through the actions below.

March: Established procedures to eliminate helicopter and fixed-wing mixed traffic near the airport.

March: Amended local air traffic procedures to eliminate the use of visual separation between helicopters and fixed wing aircraft within 5 miles of the airport.

March: Permanently closed Route 4 between Hains Point and the Wilson Bridge.

March: Revised agreements with the military to require ADS-B Out broadcasting.

April: Increased support, oversight and staffing for the DCA air traffic control team.

May: Discontinued operations from the Pentagon Heliport (JPN) until the FAA and DOW updated procedures and fixed technical issues at the Heliport.

February: Began reviewing other airports with high volumes of mixed helicopter and airplane traffic.

February: Supercharged air traffic controller hiring (Best and Brightest) to address nationwide staffing shortage.

March: Increased recruitment of the next generation of air traffic controllers through the Enhanced Air Traffic – Collegiate Training Initiative (E-CTI) program. During the Trump administration the FAA has partnered with seven schools to improve the pipeline of qualified controller trainees and address the nationwide staffing shortage.

March: Began implementation of Runway Incursion Device (RID) which provides additional surface safety information for terminal controllers.

April: FAA held Medical Process Listening Session.

April: FAA held Rotorcraft Safety Roundtable.

May: FAA held Air Carrier Roundtable.

May: Continued rollout of Tower Simulation Systems (TSS) addressing surface safety and controller training at airports.

May: Unveiled New Package to Boost Air Traffic Controller Workforce to address nationwide staffing shortage.



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June: Secretary Duffy announced support for an independent audit by the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General (DOT OIG).

June: Published modifications to helicopter zones and routes moving them farther away from flight paths at the airport.

June: Conducted Safety Risk Management (SRM) panel on changes to DCA Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) 7110.2L (SRM document approved July 2025).

June: Initiative for Federal Contract Towers with Control Tower Operator Partnership (CTO-P) to improve the pipeline of qualified air traffic controller trainees and address the nationwide staffing shortage.

July: Congress confirmed FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford.

September: Met air traffic hiring goal for fiscal year 2025, bringing in 2,026 new controllers to address the nationwide staffing shortage.

September: Launched vendor challenge for Prime Integrator for Brand New Air Traffic Control System.

September: Awarded Surface Movement Radar (SMR) replacement contract.

September: Deployed first Terminal Voice Switch at Alleghany Tower.

October: Updated Helicopter routes and zones at DCA, IAD and BWI.

October: Air Traffic Controllers began using Time Based Flow Management (TBFM) departure scheduling at Washington Center and the supporting facilities using the DCA Extended Departure Scheduling System. This delivers a more predictable and orderly flow of flights into DCA and manages demand spikes over given time periods.

October: Deployed the 13th site of Terminal Flight Data Manager (TFDM).

November: Released Common Automation Platform (CAP) RFI.

November: Issued Emergency Order temporarily reducing flights at 40 airports, after we saw signs of stress in the system and proactively reduced flights to keep the American people flying safe.



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December: Awarded Prime Integrator to Peraton for Brand New Air Traffic Control System.

December: Deployed the 52nd Surface Awareness Initiative (SAI) which provides surface situational awareness to the tower controllers.

December: First Surface Movement Radar (SMR) operational at Houston airport.

December: Awarded radar replacement contracts.

December: Launched FAA Flight Plan 2026 and FAA reorganization, to build public trust through transparency and accountability.

- Establishing a Safety Integration Office.
- Implementing an agency-wide Safety Risk Management program.

2026

January: FAA published an Interim Final Rule that permanently restricts helicopters and powered-lift aircraft from operating in certain areas near DCA, unless it is for essential operations.

January 2026: First radar replacement operational in Santa Fe, NM.

January: The FAA permanently lowered the air traffic pattern around Van Nuys Airport after preliminary data indicated a reduction of Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) alerts for Burbank arrivals. The FAA lowered the pattern by 200 feet during an evaluation in 2025 to see if that would reduce conflicts between the Van Nuys traffic pattern and aircraft landing at Hollywood Burbank Airport.¹



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¹ This action was a result of our proactive review of other airports with high volumes of mixed helicopter and airplane traffic. The FAA lowered the pattern by 200 feet during an evaluation in 2025 to see if that would reduce conflicts between the Van Nuys traffic pattern and aircraft landing at Hollywood Burbank Airport.

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2026

March 2026: FAA issued a general notice (GENOT) suspending the use of visual separation between airplanes and helicopters near busy airports nationwide and mandating that air traffic controllers use radar to keep them separated by specific lateral or vertical distances.

May 2026: FAA issued initial responses to NTSB DCA midair collision recommendations. The responses detail how the FAA already addressed several of the 35 recommendations and is on track to complete several more by the end of 2026. Some recommendations may take several years to implement due to external factors, such as rulemaking and collective bargaining.



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