

A Day in the Life of an Airline Dispatcher



Federal Aviation
Administration

SWIM
Interactive Developer
Workshop 2016

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- Thirty years of dispatch experience.
- Twenty years of ATC TFM experience.
- Ten years of CDM leadership.
- Twenty years of instructor experience.



Flight Dispatcher

- Licensed by the FAA
- Similar to the Airline Transport Pilot curriculum
- Required for 14 CFR Part 121 operators
- Professional org is Airline Dispatchers Federation (www.dispatcher.org)
- Time and duty regs

Flight Dispatcher

- Joint operational authority over the flight with the captain (FAR 121.533).



Flight Dispatcher

121.533

- a) Each certificate holder conducting domestic operations is responsible for operational control.
- (b) The pilot in command and the aircraft dispatcher are **jointly responsible** for the preflight planning, delay, and dispatch release of a flight in compliance with this chapter and operations specifications.
- (c) The aircraft dispatcher is responsible for—
 - (1) Monitoring the progress of each flight;
 - (2) Issuing necessary information for the safety of the flight; and
 - (3) Cancelling or redispersing a flight if, in his opinion or the opinion of the pilot in command, the flight cannot operate or continue to operate safely as planned or released.
- (d) Each pilot in command of an aircraft is, during flight time, in command of the aircraft and crew and is responsible for the safety of the passengers, crewmembers, cargo, and airplane.
- (e) Each pilot in command has full control and authority in the operation of the aircraft, without limitation, over other crewmembers and their duties during flight time, whether or not he holds valid certificates authorizing him to perform the duties of those crewmembers.

Flight Dispatcher Duties

- Flight Planning
- Flight Releasing
- Flight Monitoring
- And so much more!



Flight Dispatcher Workstation

- Flight Planning System (may include releasing and ATCFP)
- FO Operational Host for FLIFO, weather, W/B. etc.
- Flight Monitoring System (FE, Fusion, etc.)
- Web based services-external (OIS, CIWS, AWC, CCFP, etc. via CDMNET)
- Web based services-internal (taxi delay, diversions, contract wx, etc.)
- Flight Schedule Monitor
- TSD-C
- USM (Unsolicited Message) alerting system
- Air-ground comm system (ACARS)
- Internal chat (MS Communicator, Google Hangouts)
- Live terminal flight tracking (ASDE-X, Passur, Aerobahn)
- Maintenance Control system
- Enroute and Approach charts (Minimized or hard copy)
- Manuals: AFM, FOM, DOM, MEL (Minimized or hard copy)
- Turnover/briefing system

Flight Dispatcher Shift Begins

- Turnover briefing from previous dispatcher
 - Terminal and en route weather
 - NOTAMs
 - Flights already dispatched (airborne and pre-departure)
 - Maintenance issues
 - ATC issues
 - IT issues
- Sign in to workstation and apps
- Self Briefing
 - Many of the same elements plus bulletins, memos, etc.

Flight Dispatcher Shift Begins

We're now 15- 30 minutes or more into the shift...

Let's dispatch!

Flight Dispatcher Shift Begins

- Worksheet may have 25-50 flights for an 8 hour shift.
- Perhaps 10-15 flights airborne at any one time.
- Fewer flights for international desks.
- More flights for close-in “shuttle” type city pairs.
- Short flights (<350 NM) may use canned numbers.

Flight Planning

- Flight planning is usually accomplished 2-3 hours prior to Ptime.
- Flight releasing and filing ATCFP may occur at the same time, or on a delayed basis.
- Dispatcher may need to wait for maintenance to clear a deferred item, or for payload info to update.
- Dozens of additional applications and databases feed into the flight planning system.
- Dispatcher may work several hours ahead looking for problem flights (overweight, significant MEL, etc.)

Flight Planning

- Flight planning system may use ATC published routes including preferred, playbook, CDR, plus company routes.
- May also custom compute a “least cost” flight plan using:
 - NRP (National Route Program) requirements.
- May include variables such as overfly costs, speed up/slow down logic to meet A:00, misconex pax, etc.
- May be constrained to pref or ATC required route due to busy airspace such as CHI-NYC.
- Dispatcher will insure route is conformant to ATC advisories.

Flight Releasing

- The dispatcher will send/load the Dispatch Release (the legal document releasing the flight) along with the flight plan, weather briefing package, maintenance briefing package, performance data, etc. to be retrieved in person by the captain.
- Sending/loading the Release and Flight Plan will update many enterprise level systems such as FLIFO, W/B, etc.
- Filed the ATCFP.

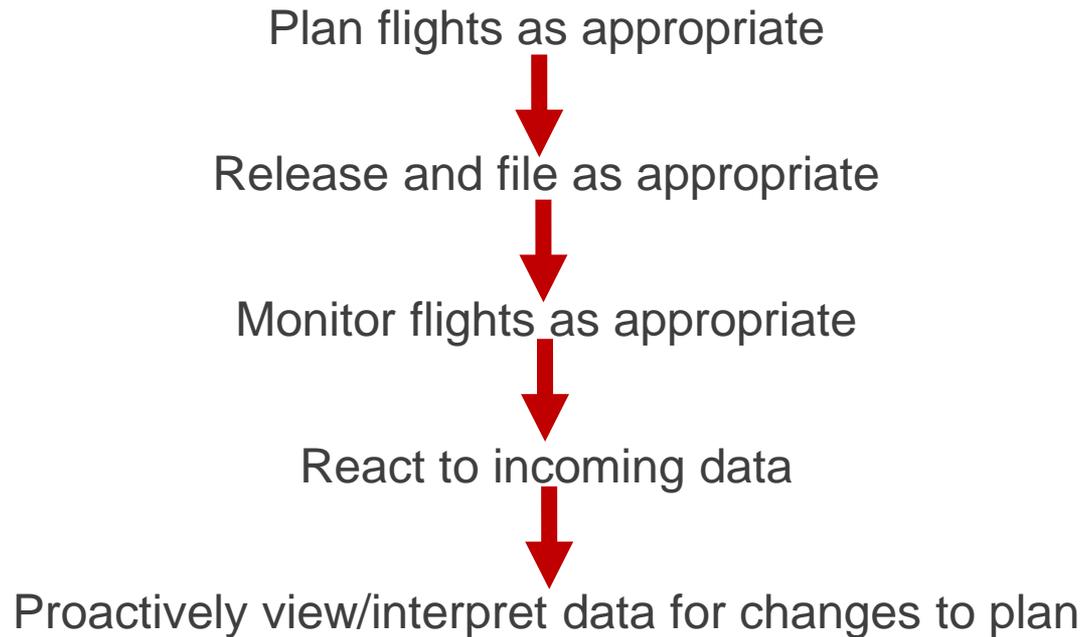
Flight Monitoring

- The dispatcher will use a graphic based flight monitoring system such as FE or Fusion.
- Augmented with terminal displays such as ASDE-X or Passur.
- Will receive USM (Unsolicited electronic messages) from many sources via the USM alerting tool.
- USMs may include weather updates, ATC advisories, W/B changes, plane changes, ACARS messages, FLIFO changes (delays, cancels), etc.
- USMs may number in the hundreds ***each hour***.

Each hour the dispatcher:

- Will flight plan, release, and ATC file flights as noted on the worksheet.
- Will continuously monitor airborne and off block flights so as to be aware of changes such as weather, performance, deferred items, etc.
- Will self brief as changes to forecasts, NOTAMs and other operational data are received.
- Will advise flights via datalink or voice as to significant changes to the plan, including any that require an amended dispatch release.

Hourly Workflow



But wait....there's more!

Hourly Workflow

Disruption!



Disruption!

- Weather
- Irrops/diversions
- Inflight emergency
- Special flight planning
- What else?



Disruption!

During disruptive times, access to ***information that can guide quality decision making***, is of the utmost importance.



“I have lots and lots of data, but not
much information.”
- Unknown