U.S. Department   **Assistant Administrator for NextGen**   **800 Independence Avenue SW**
of Transportation   **Washington, DC 20591**

Federal Aviation
Administration

8/29/2023

Airport Operators
Interested in Remote Towers

Dear:

This letter provides information to airport operators seeking to build a remote tower and/or approached by remote tower vendor(s). The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) advises all airports that there are currently no remote tower systems approved by the FAA for use in the National Airspace System (NAS), and no vendor can guarantee FAA approval of their remote tower system. Airport operators may contact the FAA directly to obtain up-to-date information on approvals for specific systems.

In the 2018 FAA Reauthorization Act, Congress directed the FAA to establish an remote tower pilot program to develop a clear process for the safety and operational certification of remote tower systems. The FAA's initial approach for the pilot program was to select individual pilot sites to demonstrate the use of these systems and inform development of standards and approval processes. To this end, the FAA selected Leesburg Executive Airport (JYO) and Northern Colorado Regional Airport (FNL) as the first two pilot sites. However, there is still significant work that must be completed before any remote tower system obtains FAA System Design Approval (SDA) (i.e., certification) for use in the NAS.

As of September 2022, the FAA decided to no longer select individual airport pilot sites to evaluate vendor systems. The FAA is requiring future applicant's systems to be tested at the William J. Hughes Technical Center (WJHTC) in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The FAA is establishing this testbed to accelerate the timeline in meeting the goals of congressional direction. This revised approach will allow the FAA to provide a broader solution to the remote tower marketplace in a timelier manner. Additionally, this approach will reduce risk to FAA and airport sponsors if a vendor system cannot meet FAA safety standards.

The process for a vendor to obtain SDA is outlined in the FAA's draft Remote Tower Advisory Circular. https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/draft-rts-advisory-circular-2022-02-18.pdf, is a long and rigorous process that can take upwards of five years to complete. If a vendor system obtains SDA, the system will be added to a Qualified Vendor System List. Only then can sponsors of candidate airports purchase an remote tower system for the purpose of providing air traffic control tower services at their individual airport.

For questions or concerns regarding this memo, contact Matthew Richardson at 202-267-3171 or Matthew.Richardson@faa.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Paul Fontaine

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Paul V. Fontaine
Acting Assistant Administrator for NextGen