



## **Chapter 736 Newsletter for April 2020**

### **FAA TO SCALE BACK ATC SERVICE AS TRAFFIC DECLINES**

The FAA plans to reduce the operating hours of air traffic control personnel at about 100 ATC towers and terminal radar approach control facilities in late April to limit employees' exposure to the coronavirus as the pandemic slows flight activity in the national airspace system.

No end date was given for the downsizing that will affect ATC facilities in Class C and D airspace where traffic volume has declined as much as 96 percent.

The modifications will be reviewed regularly for an eventual return to normal operations.. The FAA will conduct a regular analysis of traffic levels to determine how to appropriately staff the facilities.

“These facilities have seen a significant reduction in flights, especially during the evening and nighttime hours, since the pandemic began,” the FAA said in an **April 22 coronavirus** update. “Adjusting the operating hours will further protect our employees and reduce the possibility of temporary tower closures from COVID-19 exposures by ensuring enough controllers are available to staff the facilities during peak hours. It also will enable us to allocate difficult-to-source supplies where they are most needed.”

Aviation associations have been providing the FAA with feedback on issues to be addressed to ensure safety and procedural clarity, and to maintain efficiency when the roughly 100 affected facilities reduce their operating hours.

The FAA is working to publish guidance materials and frequently asked questions about the operating changes. A [list of affected ATC facilities](#) is available, he said.

“Notams will remain the best source of information for ATC and airport status.

### **FAA ISSUES FIRST MEDICALS TO PROFESSIONAL PILOTS WITH INSULIN-TREATED DIABETES**

The FAA has approved the first medical certificates for professional pilots who depend on insulin to control their diabetes, a policy years in the making that builds on the success of a similar policy for private pilots.

Following several years of literature review, analysis, and consultation with diabetes experts, the FAA has issued [medical certificates](#) under special issuance authorization to the first commercial pilots who use insulin to treat diabetes. These new issuances are the result of an exhaustive process of review of data, particularly the technology and accuracy of continuous glucose monitoring (CGM), which has significantly improved diabetic patients' blood glucose control. CGM was a key factor in the FAA's decision to publish the [policy announcement in late 2019](#).

## **EMERGENCY FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR GA AIRPORTS**

General aviation airports will receive \$100 million in federal relief funding, FAA officials announced April 14, and airports will have flexibility to use the money to offset lost revenue, pay debts, or upgrade facilities. AOPA has been among the most vocal advocates fighting to ensure GA benefits from the ongoing relief efforts.

Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao and FAA Associate Administrator for Airports Kirk Shaffer briefed airport industry representatives, including AOPA, in a conference call on the implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (commonly referred to as the CARES Act), which earmarked \$10 billion for the nation's airport system as a whole. Every GA airport that is part of the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems is slated to receive funds, and federal officials released a [list](#) detailing specific amounts on the way to individual airports.

The FAA divided the funding using preexisting designations that organize the nation's airports into five categories, with the corresponding allocations based on the airport's role in the national system. The largest and busiest GA airports (designated as "national" facilities) will receive \$157,000; "regional" airports will receive \$69,000; "local" airports will receive \$30,000; and "basic" airports will be allocated \$20,000. Airports that are not classified will receive \$1,000. AOPA worked hard to ensure GA was not excluded from the CARES Act funding.

## **VFR charts to go on 56-day publication cycle IN 2021**

The FAA announced plans to put visual navigation and planning charts on a 56-day publication cycle early next year, streamlining the process of updating charted information and causing some charts now in use to become obsolete earlier than their published expiration dates.

VFR terminal area charts, VFR flyway planning charts, and Helicopter Route Charts and will coincide with publication of other en route, terminal, and supplemental chart products.

The FAA expects the change to result in significant reductions of chart-related notams because new information will be added to charts more quickly than is the case on the current publication cycles of 168 days to two years. The change will also make the chart bulletins that are contained in chart supplement volumes unnecessary, the FAA said.

Pilots should note that some VFR navigation charts currently in effect will become obsolete earlier than their published expiration dates. Affected charts will be listed in a charting notice expected to be released soon.

In a related action to take effect February 25, 2021, the FAA will revise the wording of a note that appears on navigation charts that extend into foreign airspace to caution that limited chart information is provided outside of U.S. airspace for orientation and transition to foreign charts and flight information publications, and that pilots should refer to foreign publications outside of U.S. airspace.

### **Next Meeting and Notes**

When our next meeting will take place is still undetermined due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whether there will be a Fly-In is also unknown at this time.

The Central Maine Egg Festival is also unsure of its fate. Although not officially postponed or canceled, their operating dates are still to be determined..

Stay well folks. We'll get through this eventually.