

Can *More* Reporting Be An Answer?

Back in the good ol' days, controllers occasionally offered errant pilots a clearance to land on the correct runway just ahead of the error. Sometimes they would even bend the rules a little bit and offer a clearance after touchdown. The pilot was saved the deviation, and the controller was saved some extra paperwork. Those days are long gone.

Starting on January 30, 2012, FAA Order JO 7210.632 went into effect. This order "places more value on discovering why adverse safety events happen and in identifying risks, rather than determining who was at fault. It is the responsibility of all Air Traffic Organization (ATO) employees who are engaged in and support air traffic services to report all suspected unsafe air traffic occurrences."

In other words, if you start to land on the wrong runway, ATC personnel are witnessing an event meeting their new mandatory occurrence reporting paradigm. Local controllers who were early adopters of this policy said initially they were uncomfortable because it was now their responsibility to "rat" on unsafe pilot behavior. And at first, I suspected many of our local issues were an artifact of over-reporting rather than real incidents.

The intent of the policy is clear though. The FAA wants to identify unsafe actions so it can step up its game. But they can't do that without gathering data on some of



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Air Traffic Organization Policy

ORDER
JO 7210.632

Effective Date:
January 30, 2012

SUBJ: Air Traffic Organization Occurrence Reporting

The Air Traffic Organization (ATO) has moved to a more systemic view of safety within the National Airspace System (NAS). This view places more value on discovering why adverse safety events happen and in identifying risks, rather than determining who was at fault. It is the responsibility of all ATO employees who are engaged in and support air traffic services to report all suspected unsafe air traffic occurrences. The sharing of this information allows the ATO to more effectively and safely manage operations within the NAS. This directive modifies reporting requirements set forth previously to emphasize the collection of safety data as opposed to ascribing responsibility.

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NOV 11 2011
Date Signed

the precursors that lead to accidents.

Our airport's management and ATC are now working on how to deal with the runway identification issue. It may lead to higher-contrast paint on the runways so pilots can clearly see both of them. It also has resulted in verbiage on the ATIS about confusing runway numbers. And in better budgetary times, it might eventually lead to radar displays for tower controllers so they can see situations developing ahead of time.