U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Aviation Administration

Advisory Circular

Subject: **INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION THREE-LETTER DESIGNATOR AND TELEPHONY DESIGNATOR**

Date: **1/1/05** **AC No: 120-26J**
Initiated by: **OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

1. PURPOSE.
Advisory Circular 120-26J defines the criteria and procedures for obtaining an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) three-letter and/or telephony designator assignment.

2. CANCELLATION.
Advisory Circular No. 120-26H, dated 6/21/91, is canceled.

3. EXPLANATION OF CHANGES.

a. All references to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Airspace-Rules and Aeronautical Information Division, Air Traffic Publications Branch (ATP-210), have been changed to FAA Headquarters. FAA Headquarters, Flight Services Division is referred to as ATP-300. Air Traffic Planning and Procedures Service is referred to as ATP. Effective 1/1/05, all of the references above are changed to Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support.

b. Editorial and grammatical changes have been made to improve the clarity of this advisory circular.

c. All references to radiotelephony have been changed to telephony, as radiotelephone operator licenses are no longer required.

d. ICAO will not approve telephonies that are either numbers or letters. (Par.6.b)

e. The round trip and minimum aircraft requirements for a three-letter and/or telephony designator have been modified. (Par. 6c)

f. In accordance with Presidential Proclamation 5928, United States domestic airspace extends to 12 nautical miles from the coast of the United States (U.S.).

g. Regional Air Traffic Division (ATD) responsibilities have been redefined (Par.14), and redesignated as Service Area Directors.

4. RELATED READING MATERIAL.
Additional information on three-letter telephony, local telephony and special telephony designators, may be found in FAA Order 7340.1, Contractions; FAA Order 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration; FAA Order 7110.65, Air Traffic Control; Title 47 of the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), section 87.107; and ICAO Document 8585, Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities, and Services.

5. DEFINITIONS.

a. Three-Letter Designator – A three-letter designator is used in conjunction with the flight number and serves as the aircraft identification in the air traffic control system.

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The authorized designator and flight/trip number are used for company business in lieu of the aircraft registration number.

b. Telephony Designator – (CALLSIGN) Normally the aircraft operating company and/or servicing agency name or a pronounceable abbreviation of the name is used in combination with the flight number. The telephony designator is normally assigned simultaneously with the three-letter designator and becomes the aircraft identification for all voice communications with air traffic control facilities and operating services.

6. CRITERIA.

a. A three-letter designator is registered with the FAA for aircraft operating agencies and companies that, in the opinion of the State of jurisdiction (U.S.), require a specific three-letter designator. Three-letter designators are assigned by ICAO on a worldwide basis to an aircraft operating or servicing company conducting commercial domestic and/or international operations. ICAO three-letter designators may be used on the international telecommunications service when deemed advantageous for air traffic control and operational purposes.

b. A telephony designator is approved by ICAO and should be pronounceable and suitable phonetically in at least one of the following languages: English, French, or Spanish. The telephony designator, consisting of not more than two words and three syllables, should preferably resemble the name of the aircraft company, operating authority, or servicing organization. This reduces the amount of verbiage created on-line, contributing to similar sounding telephony designator confusion. Letters and numbers are not assigned as telephony designators. However, companies that have previously been assigned letters and numbers as telephony designators will retain those telephony designators.

c. The award of a three-letter designator and telephony designator is for the improvement of Air Traffic Control (ATC) communications, and the reduction of frequency congestion. The requestor should show that award would have a significant impact on the ATC system (defined as affecting three or more aircraft). A three-letter designator or telephony designator may be awarded to; (1) an aircraft operating company and/or servicing agency that operate or service 15 or more scheduled non-seasonal international round trip air operations per week, and generate appropriate flight movement messages over the National Aviation Data Inter-change Network (NADIN); or, (2) at least 20 scheduled non-seasonal domestic commercial round trip air operations per week. Aircraft operating companies and/or servicing agencies, that do not demonstrate minimum criteria, may apply for a waiver of these criteria with Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, and still be awarded a three-letter designator or telephony designator. The waiver must be deemed advantageous to the U.S. Air Traffic Control (ATC) system and operationally appropriate by the FAA. Waivers are authorized on an individual basis.

d. ICAO Document 8585 states that the three-letter designator of an entity may be used as part of the address indication for the Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN). Aircraft operating companies and/or servicing agencies desiring to send and/or receive communications via AFTN, must complete a Memorandum of Agreement on usage, prior to being allowed to connect to NADIN for international and

domestic telecommunications services. NADIN is an integrated worldwide system of aeronautical fixed circuits (including AFTN) providing exchange of messages between aeronautical fixed stations within the network. NADIN telecommunication service provides an electronic media for transmission of international flight movement messages and flight plans.

e. NADIN connections are authorized for aircraft operators and/or servicing agencies to introduce aircraft movement data into the air navigation system, and for the exchange of permissible information, in accordance with ICAO Annex 10, and Title 19 of 14 CFR, Part 189.

f. NADIN authorized users must have a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the FAA to access the NADIN, and for transmitting non-ICAO (domestic) flight movement messages. The use of the assigned designator will not be approved until the MOA has been finalized. For additional information concerning MOA's, contact Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support.
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g. Companies that pay a service-fee company to input data, must assure that the service-fee company has a MOA on file with the FAA. Those companies that will input data solely through FAA facilities must state in their request that the company does not require a NADIN connection, they have not hired a service fee company for data entry, and that they will be responsible for entering all data through FAA facilities.

7. PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION.

Requests for ICAO three-letter designator and/or telephony designators should be addressed to the Service Area Directors, at the appropriate FAA Service Area Office. The regional office will approve, deny, or request information from the applicant/requestor. The regional office will then forward an acceptance recommendation, to Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support.

b. The Service Area Director will ensure all documentation submitted by the applicant is validated before data is forwarded. It is the Service Area's responsibility to review the application and determine if the applicant meets the Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, ICAO and AC120-26 criteria, before submitting recommendations to Headquarters. Upon that determination, the request is either denied by the region or submitted to FAA Headquarters, Operational Procedures, with recommendations supporting the approval.

c. Three-letter and telephony designators are assigned by Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, with approval of ICAO. Assignments are made on a worldwide basis, for commercial domestic/international air traffic control operations, and use in the NADIN system. When ICAO officially approves the application, it will be returned to the region. The Service Area Director will notify its ATC facilities, and Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, will notify the other facilities and assure publication in FAA Order 7340.1, Contractions.

8. DOCUMENTATION.

To determine eligibility for an ICAO three-letter and/or telephony designator, the following information is necessary:

a. Name and address of the company, contact personnel and telephone numbers.

b. The number and type of aircraft operation or service provided. (minimum 3 aircraft; a list of operators served is required for servicing operations.)

c. The method of data entry into the NADIN system. (Is NADIN connection needed by applicant? Was a service fee company hired? Is applicant filing through FAA facilities?)

d. The number and type of NADIN messages generated on a daily basis, if connected.

e. A copy of the company/operator flight schedule.

Not required for servicing agencies.

f. A copy of the FAA Certificate that authorizes the company operations, stating the Title 14 CFR Part under which operations are to be conducted, i.e., 14 CFR Parts 121, 125 and 135.

NOTE: *Company operations under Title 14 CFR,* ***Part 91 solely, do not make a company eligible for an ICAO three-letter and/or telephony designator (s).***

g. Provide at least five (5) suggested three-letter designators and telephony designators, in order desired.

NOTE: *The required administrative period for approval of a company three-letter and/or telephony designator is approximately 90 calendar days. Failure to submit proper documentation may delay designator assignment*

9. BASIS FOR ASSIGNMENT.

a. ICAO approved three-letter and/or telephony designator assignments are supported by the FAA, if deemed advantageous to the U.S. Air Traffic Control (ATC) system.

b. Approved ICAO three-letter designator be included in the remarks section of flight or telephony designators will not be assigned to eliminate problems resolvable by changing registration numbers, or similar sounding company names.

c. Title 14 CFR 91.169 (d) requires when a flight plan has been activated, the pilot in command shall notify a Flight Service Station or ATC facility upon canceling or completing the flight under the flight plan. This will avoid the FAA implementing search and rescue procedures.

10. CHANGES IN COMPANY STATUS.

Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, should be notified in writing immediately, when an assigned three-letter and/or telephony designator is no longer required, or upon a change in the name, address, or physical location of the company. Any designator released will not be reassigned for at least 60 calendar days. Exceptions will be considered on an individual basis. Listed below are some reasons for the notification of release:

a. Operations are permanently suspended or canceled for any reason; or,

b. Company names holding more than one three-letter and/or telephony designator.

11. USE OF AIRCRAFT COMPANY THREE-LETTER AND/OR TELEPHONY DESIGNATOR.

a. Authorized three-letter designators and/or telephony designators are valid when aircraft are flown according to provisions of the CFR under which an operating certificate was obtained from the FAA.

b. A new or changed three-letter designator and/or telephony designator should

(1) commemorative flights;

plans for at least 60 days following the effective date.

c. Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, reserves the right to revise or cancel any three-letter and/or telephony designator assignment, should confusion result within the United States. ICAO Document 8585 states in the interest of safety, simple procedures should be developed and maintained by states and aircraft operating companies/agencies for detecting, reporting and eliminating similar sounding radiotelephonies that may cause confusion or mistakes in identification.

12. PUBLICATION OF AIRCRAFT COMPANY THREE-LETTER DESIGNATORS AND/OR TELEPHONY DESIGNATORS.

Effective dates of aircraft company three-letter and/or telephony designators will be timely to permit entry into FAA Order 7340.1, Contractions, and the Stored Flight Plan Program. Affected FAA facilities will be advised of the authorized three-letter designator and/or telephony designator pending publication in appropriate FAA and ICAO documents

13. SPECIAL TELEPHONY DESIGNATOR ASSIGNMENTS.

a. Special telephony designators may be temporarily authorized only when their assignment will identify special handling required by air traffic control.

b. Special telephony designators are approved by the FAA.

c. Special telephony designators may be authorized for the following categories:
plans.

(2) large number of aircraft participating in an organized race;

(3) aircraft operating during an emergency or disaster condition; or,

(4) aircraft requiring special handling for test purposes.

d. Requests should be made to Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, and include the following:

(1) type of flight;

(2) handling required;

(3) type and number of aircraft; and

(4) routes and duration of operation.

14. LOCAL TELEPHONY DESIGNATOR ASSIGNMENTS

a. The Service Area Director issues local telephony designators, according to FAA Order 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration.

b. Local telephony designators are used only for communications with local airport traffic control towers and/or air traffic facilities for VFR (VMC) operations. A Letter Of Agreement (LOA) is required between the local tower/facility and the requesting company/applicant. The LOA will contain provisions to ensure that local telephony is used only with facilities that are signatories to the agreement.

c. When a LOA expires, the local tower/facility will notify the company/ applicant for renewal. Local telephony designators are not to be used for filing flight

d. The Service Area Directors shall coordinate with bordering Service Areas, to assure that telephonies do not overlap. The Service Area Directors shall maintain a regional master database for local telephony.

e. The Service Area Directors shall forward copies of all approved telephonies to Headquarters, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support, for inclusion in the national database.

Paul J. Sheridan
Acting Director, Flight Services Safety and Operations Support

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spellchecked after amendment 5/7/03, 5/19/04 & 7/8/04 ET
removed references to ATP-320
Changed font to 12, per Sharon Kline 11/19/04, margined and spellchecked ET