US FAA STATEMENT

Update on Chicago Air Traffic Control Facility

It was reported by the US Federal Aviation Administration on 28th September that air traffic controllers who normally work at the FAA’s Center in Chicago En Route Center in Aurora, Illinois are now working at other surrounding FAA air traffic facilities to help safely maximize the traffic flow in and out of the Chicago-area airports while the FAA and its telecommunications contractor, Harris Corporation, repair damaged communications equipment at Chicago Center. Some Chicago Center controllers also are travelling to other high-altitude air traffic centres near Minneapolis, Kansas City, Indianapolis and Cleveland to assist controllers at those locations and minimize disruptions for travellers.

The FAA steadily has increased the number of flights arriving and departing at O’Hare and Midway. Air traffic controllers safely managed about 60% of typical traffic on 28th September at O’Hare and over 75% at Midway.

The agency also has reduced delays in the Chicago area airports by developing new communication and flight plan processing solutions. The FAA re-established consistent arrival and departure rates at Chicago area airports, providing airlines with needed predictability to build flight schedules. It is understood that the agency is using all existing tools to maximize operations, and is developing new capabilities where necessary to return to normal service levels in the Chicago area.

Furthermore, the FAA has brought in its best technicians from around the country to expedite the replacement of the central communications network at Chicago Center. The first shipment of replacement equipment was scheduled to arrive late on 28th September with additional deliveries occurring over the next few days. Teams will be working around the clock to install equipment, run cable and restore network connections at the facility. Meanwhile, the FAA has set a target to return Chicago Center to full service by 13th October.

Finally, the FAA’s entire workforce is working around the clock to continue taking travellers to their destinations as safely and efficiently as possible and wishes to thank its dedicated staff and partners in Chicago and other parts of the country for stepping up quickly, creatively and enthusiastically to keep the system moving.
HUERTA CALLS FOR FULL REVIEW OF FAA CONTINGENCY PLANS AND SECURITY PROTOCOLS

On 29th September FAA Administrator Michael P. Huerta announced the agency is conducting a 30-day review of contingency plans and security protocols for its major facilities, after a criminal action by a contractor on Friday knocked out communications equipment at an FAA high-altitude air traffic facility in Aurora, Illinois.

He said at an Air Traffic Control Association conference in Maryland: “I do understand the travelling public’s frustrations with flight delays and cancellations. The air transportation system is vital to our economy and people rely on it to function 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I want to make sure that we have the most robust contingency plans possible.”