

5/16/2019

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

2019-33/10-5

1616191

To: FAA (ATM NCT TRACON)

Info: FAA (AVP-1, AVP-200, AWP-600, AFS-280, AFS-200, AFS-400, Director of Air Traffic Operations WSA South), A4A, ALPA, AOPA, APA, ASAP, CAPA, ATSAP, ATSG, IATA, ICAO, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA

From: Becky L. Hooey, Director  
NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System

Re: Similar Sounding Fix Names - NARWL/NRRLI

We recently received an ASRS report describing a safety concern that may involve your area of operational responsibility. We do not have sufficient details to assess either the factual accuracy or possible gravity of the report. It is our policy to relay the reported information to the appropriate authority for evaluation and any necessary follow-up. We feel you should be aware of the enclosed deidentified report.

ASRS has previously alerted on this issue. Alert message 2018-111/10-16 is also enclosed.

To properly assess the usefulness of our alert message service, we would appreciate it if you would take the time to give us your feedback on the value of the information that we have provided. Please contact Dennis Doyle at (408) 541-2831 or email at [dennis.j.doyle@nasa.gov](mailto:dennis.j.doyle@nasa.gov)



Aviation Safety Reporting System  
P.O. Box 189 | Moffett Field, CA | 94035-0189



**ACN: 1616191**

**Time**

Date: 201902

Local Time Of Day: 1801-2400

**Place**

Locale Reference.ATC Facility: ZOA.ARTCC

State Reference: CA

Altitude.MSL.Single Value: 38000

**Environment**

**Aircraft 1**

ATC / Advisory.Center: ZOA

Make Model Name: B737-800

**Person 1**

Function.Flight Crew: First Officer

Function.Flight Crew: Pilot Flying

ASRS Report Number: 1616191

**Person 2**

Function.Flight Crew: Captain

Function.Flight Crew: Pilot Not Flying

ASRS Report Number: 1616193

**Events**

Anomaly.ATC Issue: All Types

Anomaly.Deviation - Track / Heading: All Types

Anomaly.Deviation - Procedural: Clearance

Anomaly.Deviation - Procedural: Published Material / Policy

Detector.Person: Air Traffic Control

Result.Flight Crew: Became Reoriented

Result.Flight Crew: Requested ATC Assistance / Clarification

Result.Air Traffic Control: Issued New Clearance

**Narrative 1**

We were cleared to NRRLI and cleared to descend via the SERFR 3. I selected NARWL in the FMC and then Captain verified the fix but we both missed the error. I then selected 6,000 feet in the altitude selector. After three or four minutes, Center called and said "(Call sign)?" We replied and then he said we were off course and sent us to WWAVS intersection and told us to descend to 20,000 feet and contact another Center. We did have the new Controller pass on our error.

**Narrative 2**

The Controller cleared us direct NRRLI with an altitude assignment and the SERFR3 Arrival. We programmed the FMC and thought we had done it correctly. A few minutes later, he cleared us to WWAVS and gave an altitude and a new frequency. He said it would have been easier if we had just gone to NRRLI. After investigation, we saw that we were going direct NARWL instead of NRRLI.

Need to change one of those names on the SERFR Arrival. Until then, controllers and pilots both

need to overemphasize the correct fix to reduce confusion (similar to what we do when similar call signs are on the frequency).

**Synopsis**

B737-800 flight crew reported similar named fixes NARWL and NRRLI on the same RNAV arrival caused confusion and led to course deviation.

**Previous Alert**

8/1/2018

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

2018-111/10-16

1536098

To: FAA (ATM NCT TRACON)

Info: FAA (AVP-1, AVP-200, AWP-600, AFS-280, AFS-200, AFS-400, Director of Air Traffic Operations WSA South), A4A, ALPA, AOPA, APA, ASAP, CAPA, ATSAP, ATSG, IATA, ICAO, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA

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NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System

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Aviation Safety Reporting System  
P.O. Box 189 | Moffett Field, CA | 94035-0189



**ACN: 1536098**

**Time**

Date: 201804

Local Time Of Day: 1201-1800

**Place**

Locale Reference.Airport: SFO.Airport

State Reference: CA

Altitude.MSL.Single Value: 30000

**Environment**

Flight Conditions: VMC

**Aircraft 1**

ATC / Advisory.Center: ZOA

Make Model Name: Medium Transport, Low Wing, 2 Turboprop Eng

**Person 1**

Function.Flight Crew: Captain

Function.Flight Crew: Pilot Not Flying

ASRS Report Number: 1536098

**Events**

Anomaly.ATC Issue: All Types

Anomaly.Deviation - Track / Heading: All Types

Anomaly.Deviation - Procedural: Published Material / Policy

Anomaly.Deviation - Procedural: Clearance

Detector.Person: Air Traffic Control

Result.Flight Crew: Became Reoriented

Result.Flight Crew: Returned To Clearance

Result.Air Traffic Control: Issued New Clearance

**Narrative 1**

Enroute to SFO, leading a pack of arrivals, Oakland Center, I thought gave us direct "NARWL", which made sense since it is downrange of the SERFR 3 STAR, however; they actually gave us direct "NRRLI" also downrange on the STAR. After 2 minutes, Oakland realized that we were heading to the wrong waypoint, and corrected us to direct "NRRLI". No traffic conflicts or other issues, sounded like a common occurrence. Probably a bad idea to name two waypoints on the SERFR STAR both NARWL (gnarl) and NRRLI (gnarly).

**Synopsis**

Air taxi Captain reported a track deviation while on the SERFR THREE Arrival to SFO. Captain cited similar sounding fixes NARWL and NRRLI as a contributing factor.