

ALERT BULLETIN

AB 2021:21/11-3

12/17/2021

1844881, 1852509, 1852954, 1851943, 1851508,
1848735, 1852910

TO: FAA (AJW-1C5, AJW-1C6, AJW-1C7)

INFO: FAA (AVP-1, AVP-200, AFS-200, AFS-280, AFS-400, AFS-500, Director of Air Traffic Operations - WSA, CSA, ESA (North and South) Runway Safety Team), A4A, ALPA, APA, ASAP, ATSG, CAPA, IATA, ICASS, ICAO, IATA, IFALPA, IPA, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA, SWAPA

FROM: Becky L. Hooley, Director
NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System

SUBJ: Disruptive Chatter on Guard Frequency

We recently received ASRS reports 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 following:

ASRS received multiple reports regarding inappropriate and unprofessional chatter on guard frequency.

(ACN 1844881) Captain reported missing a frequency change and stated the First Officer had turned down the volume of guard frequency due to people "meowing."

(ACN 1852509) Air Carrier Captain reported inappropriate radio transmissions on guard frequency interfered with their ability to hear ZNY ATC instructions.

(ACN 1852954) Air Carrier pilot reported non-emergency flight related transmissions on Guard frequency. Reporter stated this resulted in interrupted communications, creating a safety of flight issue.

Reports 1851943, 1851508, 1848735 and 1852910 describe similar events and are 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 Dr. Becky Hooley at (408) 541-2854 or email at becky.l.hooley@nasa.gov.



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



ACN 1844881

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202110
Local Time Of Day	1201 to 1800

PLACE

Locale	ZHU.ARTCC
State	TX

ENVIRONMENT

Flight Conditions	VMC
-------------------	-----

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

ATC / Advisory - Center	ZHU
Make Model Name	Small Transport
Operating Under FAR Part	135

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	Captain
Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Flying
ASRS Report Number	1844881

EVENTS

Anomaly	Aircraft Equipment Problem - Less Severe
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - Flight Crew	Requested ATC Assistance / Clarification
Result - Air Traffic Control	Provided Assistance

NARRATIVE 1

Never received hand-off from Houston ATC.

Did not receive hand-off from Houston. If we did we both missed several attempts by Houston to give us frequency change. Checked with [First Officer] FO who was monitoring 121.5 only to be told FO turned the volume down because of people meowing, when we turned up volume and contacted Atlanta they gave us 120.4 . We were past out Top of Descent (TOD), he laughed and said thought you missed something being still at 35,000 [feet] 50 miles out, gave us a heading and descent landed ZZZ with no further issues. I did have a number to call [and] gave them all my info. He said he still had to fill out a report even though we were in no one's way and middle of nowhere.

SYNOPSIS

Captain reported missing a frequency change and stated the First Officer had turned down the volume of guard frequency due to people "meowing."

ACN 1852509

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence 202111
Local Time Of Day No Local Time Of Day Stated

PLACE

Locale ZNY.ARTCC
State NY

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

ATC / Advisory - Center ZNY
Make Model Name Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part 121

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew Captain
ASRS Report Number 1852509

EVENTS

Anomaly Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - FAR
Anomaly Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published
Material / Policy
Anomaly Inflight Event / Encounter - Other / Unknown
Detector - Person Flight Crew
Result - Flight Crew Requested ATC Assistance / Clarification

NARRATIVE 1

Crew both inbound to EWR and outbound had to switch off guard frequency (121.5) with distraction of frequent inappropriate transmissions taking place (meowing sounds, political utterances, etc). Transmissions occurred throughout New York airspace. Safety was obviously diminished with the inability of crew to monitor frequency for potential safety related information. Absent switching off frequency, crew was unable to appropriately hear and monitor primary ATC frequencies.

SYNOPSIS

Air Carrier Captain reported inappropriate radio transmissions on guard frequency interfered with their ability to hear ZNY ATC instructions.

ACN 1852954

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202111
Local Time Of Day	0601 to 1200

PLACE

Locale	ORD.Airport
State	IL
Altitude - MSL	20000

ENVIRONMENT

Flight Conditions	VMC
-------------------	-----

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

ATC / Advisory - Center	ZAU
Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	First Officer
Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Not Flying
ASRS Report Number	1852954

EVENTS

Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - FAR
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - Flight Crew	Became Reoriented
Result - Flight Crew	Requested ATC Assistance / Clarification

NARRATIVE 1

On arrival to ORD from ZZZZ at approximately XA:50Z near RHIVR, 121.5 (guard) frequency became saturated with multiple [name related statement] calls. These calls stepped on several ATC transmissions and interrupted communications with arrival control, creating a safety of flight issue. After approximately 1-2 minutes, the calls ceased, allowing clear communication to continue. The high potential for a serious incident to occur as a result of the lack of communications discipline or crews choosing not to monitor 121.5 is alarming and requires immediate attention.

SYNOPSIS

Air Carrier pilot reported non-emergency flight related transmissions on Guard frequency. Reporter stated this resulted in interrupted communications, creating a safety of flight issue.

ACN 1851943

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202111
Local Time Of Day	No Local Time Of Day Stated

PLACE

Altitude - MSL	36000
----------------	-------

ENVIRONMENT

Flight Conditions	VMC
-------------------	-----

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	Captain
Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Flying
ASRS Report Number	1851943

EVENTS

Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - FAR
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - General	None Reported / Taken

NARRATIVE 1

There has been an excessive use of guard frequency by pilots saying "[political utterance]" and making a cat meow sound. This is not only unprofessional but inhibits the use of the emergency frequency as intended.

SYNOPSIS

Air carrier Captain reported there is an excessive use of guard frequency by pilots making statements and sounds unrelated to safety of flight.

ACN 1851508

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202110
Local Time Of Day	1201 to 1800

PLACE

Locale	ZHU.ARTCC
State	TX
Altitude - MSL	28000

ENVIRONMENT

Flight Conditions	VMC
-------------------	-----

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

Make Model Name	Small Aircraft, Low Wing, 2 Eng, Retractable Gear
Operating Under FAR Part	91

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	Captain
Function - Flight Crew	Flight Engineer / Second Officer
Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Flying
ASRS Report Number	1851508

EVENTS

Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - FAR
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - General	None Reported / Taken

NARRATIVE 1

Enroute from HOU to ELP at cruising level (FL280) and monitoring Guard Freq of 121.5, we heard numerous chatter from various aircraft totally unrelated to the safety of flight. Uttering words such as "[political utterance]," "[another political utterance]" meowing like a cat, etc.

Obviously this is not only very unprofessional, but dangerous to the safety of flight!

SYNOPSIS

Corporate pilot reported hearing a significant amount of chatter on guard frequency that was not related to safety of flight.

ACN 1848735

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202110
Local Time Of Day	1201 to 1800

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Flying
ASRS Report Number	1848735

EVENTS

Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - FAR
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - Flight Crew	Became Reoriented

NARRATIVE 1

I was Pilot Flying this leg, the Captain was Pilot Monitoring. We were en-route and given an ATC frequency change. The Captain changed frequencies and checked in with the center controller with our altitude, and the controller replied "roger". About 10 minutes later, we received an ACARS message from our dispatcher saying that ATC was looking for us, and gave us the frequency. We noticed that it was one digit off of the frequency we were speaking with, and changed it to the correct one to check in with ATC. The cause of this event was misreading the ATC frequency.

This could have been avoided if the controller that we checked on with told us the frequency was incorrect, which is what typically happens in this case. We would have been able to go back to the prior frequency and get the proper one. Another way would be if we had heard the controllers if they were trying to reach us on guard. Guard was particularly busy with meowing and nonsense that morning (as it typically is) so we had the volume set low. I have said it time and time again, guard has become so ridiculous with chatter as of late, and it has been making it difficult to monitor. This is an issue that needs to be resolved.

SYNOPSIS

Air carrier First Officer reported missing a frequency change due to misreading the frequency numbers. Reporter stated that although they were monitoring guard frequency so ATC could contact them, they had the volume turned down due to the excessive amount of chatter.

ACN 1852910

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202111
Local Time Of Day	1801 to 2400

PLACE

Locale	ZMP.ARTCC
State	MN

ENVIRONMENT

Flight Conditions	VMC
-------------------	-----

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	First Officer
Function - Flight Crew	Pilot Flying
ASRS Report Number	1852910

EVENTS

Anomaly	Deviation - Altitude - Excursion From Assigned Altitude
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Clearance
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - FAR
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - Flight Crew	Requested ATC Assistance / Clarification
Result - Air Traffic Control	Provided Assistance

NARRATIVE 1

Our filed cruise altitude was FL370. At the time of the event, we were climbing through FL300 for our last cleared altitude of FL310 near the ODI VOR. ATC called us and said "Aircraft X, climb and maintain FL....." I could not hear the last part of the transmission over someone saying "[political utterance]" on the guard frequency, which the PM and I were both monitoring on the 2nd comm radio. The PM thought he heard FL350 and I wasn't sure what I heard, although I had already started spinning up the altitude pre-select knob. For a minute while we tried to request clarification on a busy center frequency, there was confusion between myself and the PM on whether to continue climbing or leveling at FL310, which was quickly approaching. The PM eventually clarified the clearance to FL350 and we continued to climb with no incident.

We were unable to fully hear a clearance from ATC because of inappropriate use of the guard frequency. This "trend" seems to be increasing recently so it's no surprise it eventually led to us missing a clearance and causing unnecessary confusion in a critical phase of flight (less than 1,000 ft. to level-off). I'm submitting this as a data point of inappropriate use of the guard frequency.

SYNOPSIS

Air carrier First Officer reported missing the last part of an ATC clearance due to chatter on guard frequency which the flight crew was monitoring. The reporter stated the chatter seems to be increasing and causes confusion at critical phases of flight.