

6/11/2025

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

2025-134/6-11

2235828

To: FAA (ATM C90 TRACON)

Info: FAA (Director of Air Traffic Operations CSA, AJV-A, AVP-1, AVP-200, AGL-600, AFS-260, AFS-200), A4A, AAAE, ALPA, AOPA, APA, ASAP, ATSAP, ATSG, CAPA, IATA, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA, SWAPA, Jeppesen Sanderson Inc.

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

Re: C90 ATC Frequency Issue

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 enclosed deidentified report.

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 Hooey at (408) 541-2854 or email at becky.l.hooey@nasa.gov.



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



ACN 2235828**DATE / TIME**

Date of Occurrence	202504
Local Time Of Day	1801 to 2400

PLACE

Locale	ORD.Airport
State	IL
Altitude - MSL	7000

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

ATC / Advisory - TRACON	C90
Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121

PERSON 1

Function - Air Traffic Control	Approach
ASRS Report Number	2235828

EVENTS

Anomaly	ATC Issue - All Types
Anomaly	Ground Event / Encounter - Ground Equipment Issue
Detector - Person	Air Traffic Control
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - Flight Crew	Requested ATC Assistance / Clarification
Result - Air Traffic Control	Provided Assistance

NARRATIVE 1

There is a recurring equipment issue at C90 with the frequency 125.0. We use 125.0 as our primary frequency on the midnight/overnight shifts.

I receive regular pilot reports about static and feedback on the frequency in between transmissions while using 125.0, generally at altitudes below 8000 and north or east of ORD. During midnight operations at C90, all operations are on 125.0 as culturally it is unacceptable to have multiple flights on different frequencies. All transmissions/communications must occur on a shared frequency during overnight operations. 125.0 is the primary departure frequency during the daytime operations until more sectors begin to get opened. It's unacceptable to have such issues with any frequency, but especially one that is used primarily all day every day.

The occasional reports of static between transmissions on 125.0 is very concerning as it indicates that there is an intermittent problem with equipment that is used to process the 125.0 frequency. I cannot even begin to imagine how catastrophic the consequences would be if 125.0 finally failed after months, possibly years, of neglect due to everyone's inability/unwillingness to address the problem, especially during a time of moderate traffic, single scope operations on a midnight shift. Each and every time we receive these reports, we change aircraft to other frequencies and the issues always disappear.

We continually report this issue to Technical Operations using a frequency discrepancy report and it seems to go nowhere. After getting multiple reports of static in between transmissions from aircraft, primarily located in the vicinity of ORD between surface – 6500 feet, we turn in the report to Technical Operations. The frequency is occasionally taken out of service for 6 – 8 hours until the same singular Technical Operations employee arrives for their shift. In what appears to be an effort to get tickets closed the employee will ask Air Traffic to get 1 singular air check on the frequency. This is usually done with an aircraft well above the problem

altitudes of the frequency, and the Technical Operations employee is given the 5 by 5 report and the frequency is quickly and promptly returned to service, only to start the process over the next day or next week. The problem has become so routine that most members of management won't even pass the report on to Technical Operations anymore citing, that's just the way it is.

Today while working the sector Aircraft X reported a lot of feedback on the frequency while climbing out of 7000 eastbound off ORD. I defeatedly advised them that facility leadership has determined it is a non-issue and previous reports have been dismissed as the issue being fixed.

The problem needs to be more thoroughly researched and troubleshot by Technical Operations to identify the root cause of the problem. The continual process of showing it out of service for a few hours just to return it back when the same usual employee shows up for their night shift in the Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC) in an effort to keep ticket times down is entirely unacceptable. Additionally, the reports need to be taken seriously by management instead of dismissing them as, the way it is.

Local aviation safety organization have not taken any initiative to press the issue, because they do not see it as an issue. We just complain to complain. Something bad is going to happen. The interference, the equipment, whatever it is, is going to fail. At a time when a controller isn't saving altitude. When they're betting on something working out. This is an unacceptable level of tolerance for a very critical frequency in extremely busy airspace. Everyone who reads these reports, who gets told about these reports, and subsequently dismisses them should be ashamed of the lack of responsiveness and attentiveness to what could potentially be a catastrophic issue someday.

Additionally, the response from management of, if the frequency fails use your Emergency Communication System (ECS) is further unacceptable. Anyone who has had to do a frequency check on an ECS knows it's an unreliable way to communicate with an aircraft, at best. At worst, it would make the problem worse. They are hard to hear, at best you'll get a 4x4 frequency check from a pilot on it, it's clear they are not meant for daily repeated use. I fear the day I would have to use an ECS to make more than 1 – 2 transmissions, hopefully to get all the aircraft onto another working frequency. We need working, functioning equipment in our facility to do our jobs properly and feel comfortable and safe doing that job all the time no matter the traffic level or time of day.

Recent responses indicated a faulty security camera was determined to be the issue and it had been rectified. The security camera either was not the problem or not solved as 125.0 continues to have issues. More recent responses indicate that facility leadership identified 2 outages on 125.0 from months ago to present. I've reported this issue upwards of 20 times. This is not an isolated incident and it happens more often than the Review Team, aviation safety organization, FAA, and other entities realize. The dismissal of these safety reports is inexcusable.

SYNOPSIS

C90 TRACON Controller reported there is a recurring equipment issue with the frequency 125.0 that is repeatedly reported about but nothing is done to fix the issue.