ALERT BULLETIN

AB 2025:17/6-2
7/17/2025
2240997, 2241670

TO: FAA (AJT-1, AOV-1)

INFO: FAA (AVP-1, AVP-200, AFS-260, AFS-200, ATM EWR ATCT, ATM N90 TRACON Director of Air Traffic Operations - WSA, CSA, ESA (North and South)), AAAE, A4A, ALPA, AOPA, APA, ASAP, ATSAP, ATSG, CAPA, IATA, ICAO, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA, SWAPA

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

SUBJ: ATC Communication Failure Procedures

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 a report from an air carrier Captain expressing concern about the lack of procedures in place to provide guidance to flight crews when ATC experiences equipment failures that affect ATC's ability to communicate with aircraft in their area. Reporter stated that the lack of guidance could contribute to flight crew confusion and possible midair collision.

Report 2241670 describes similar concerns with the lack procedures during loss of communication events.

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 2240997

DATE / TIME	
Date of Occurrence	202505
Local Time Of Day	No Local Time Of Day Stated
PLACE	
Locale	EWR.Airport
State	NJ
Altitude - AGL	0
AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X	
Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121
PERSON 1	
Function - Flight Crew	Other / Unknown
ASRS Report Number	2240997
EVENTS	
Anomaly	ATC Issue - All Types
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Clearance
Anomaly	No Specific Anomaly Occurred - Unwanted Situation

NARRATIVE 1

ATC communication failure is a grave threat to safe operations at EWR. FOM is insufficient to meet the realities of this scenario. Existing FAA regulations and subsequent FOM references are tailored to failure of aircraft communication systems, not ATC equipment failures affecting multiple aircraft. FOM procedures suggest reaching out to Dispatch through ACARS. This is an inappropriate activity for an aircraft below 10,000 feet who has been vectored off the arrival for an approach; even more so for an aircraft below 5,000 who has multiple other aircraft in the vicinity at the same or similar altitudes all pointed towards one of the Newark ILS approaches. It is insufficient and unrealistic to suggest that even 2 or 3 inbound aircraft can all safely proceed to PATRN or KILMA and hold safely at the same altitude until an ETA, as the procedure is written. Furthermore, the procedure requires the hold to be established in the direction of a hold or procedure turn depicted on the chart. Neither the ILS 22L nor the ILS 4R contain a hold or a procedure turn. Nor does the Stadium Visual Runway 29, which is the primary approach being utilized during this period of runway construction, and remains common during the strong winds of summer. I believe a midair collision is imminent and Company management is using the insufficient procedures that always exist as a shield instead of facing this reality in order to provide better guidance or establish new protocol.

SYNOPSIS

Air carrier pilot reported there are insufficient FAA regulations and references in flight operations manuals for ATC equipment failures that could impact multiple aircraft, especially during holding procedures for ILS approaches at EWR.

ACN 2241670

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202505
Local Time Of Day	No Local Time Of Day Stated

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

Make Model Name	Commercial Fixed Wing
Operating Under FAR Part	121

PERSON 1

Function - Flight Crew	Captain
ASRS Report Number	2241670

EVENTS

Anomaly	ATC Issue - All Types
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Anomaly	No Specific Anomaly Occurred - Unwanted Situation
Detector - Person	Flight Crew
Result - General	None Reported / Taken

NARRATIVE 1

In light of the issues with EWR and the TRACON losing comms and radar capability, I'm wondering if there can be some coordination between companies and the FAA at either the national level or the local level. As I write this, there have been no fewer than 3 known equipment failures in the EWR approach area in the last week to 10 days. I took the time to review lost communication procedures, and I noticed one major flaw: there is no timeline given for determining when one is to be considered in a NORDO situation. This leaves every pilot/plane/flight/crew to their own devices when it comes to determining when 'lost comm' has occurred. What is considered an appropriate time? 1 minute? 90 seconds? 5 minutes? Any of these times can be considered an eternity at 250 knots below 10,000 or when over 250 above 10.

Like any pilot, I've had gaps due to controller shift changes, controllers working multiple frequencies, or dead zones near an antenna. But the reality is that the AIM (Aeronautical Information Manual) gives little to no help in determining how long we should wait before initiating lost comm procedures.

Is there any way to work with the FAA to craft an agreement on when it is considered an appropriate time to initiate lost comm procedures, especially into EWR and the NYC area? Leaving every flight to work 'by guess and by golly' does not sound like a reasonable business plan, and some common template would be helpful.

SYNOPSIS

Air carrier pilot reported the current FAA guidance regarding lost communications procedures does not provide any timelines for when to initiate the procedure. Reporter suggested creating a template that provides such guidance.