1/20/2026 **FOR YOUR INFORMATION** 2026-20/6-2

2309257

To: FAA (ATM C90 TRACON)

Info: FAA (Director of Air Traffic Operations CSA, 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

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

Re: C90 TRACON Communication Equipment Issues

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 2309257	
DATE / TIME	
Date of Occurrence	202511
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
Function - Air Traffic Control	Departure
ASRS Report Number	2309257
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 133.62. We use 133.62 as our primary arrival control frequency. We have begun to receive regular pilot reports about static on the frequency in between transmissions while using 133.62.0, generally at altitudes below 6500 and south of ORD. 133.62 is a primary arrival 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 133.62 is very concerning as it indicates that there is an intermittent problem with equipment or frequency that is used to process the 133.62 frequency. I cannot even begin to imagine how catastrophic the consequences would be if 133.62 finally failed or became unusable after months, possibly years, of neglect due to Technical Operations' (and Management's) inability/unwillingness to address the problem, especially during a time of moderate traffic. Each and every time we receive these reports, we change aircraft to other frequencies and the issues always disappear.

Reports to Technical Operations go nowhere. After getting multiple reports of static in between transmissions from aircraft, primarily located in the vicinity of ORD between 3000 – 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 he 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.

I inquired all the pilots reporting the issue and all reported the same symptom static in between transmissions. The aircraft who first reported the issue was Aircraft X. Subsequently within the next 30 minutes, Aircraft Y and Aircraft Z also reported the issue. Most aircraft reported the issue disappeared as they crossed the shoreline going eastbound in the downwind. I reported the issue to Management to which their response was to shrug and say, call them all out of service then, I don't care.

The problem needs to be more thoroughly researched and troubleshooted 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 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.

Additionally, the response from Management of, if the frequency fails use your Emergency Communications 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.

SYNOPSIS

C90 TRACON Controller reported there is a recurring issue with the frequency 133.62.