

ALERT BULLETIN

AB 2026:11/7-1

3/24/2026

2327058

TO: FAA (ATM ZDC ARTCC)

INFO: FAA (AVP-1, AVP-200, AFS-260, AFS-200, Director of Air Traffic Operations ESA North), A4A, ALPA, AMFA, APA, ASAP, ATSG, CAPA, IAM, IATA, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NTSB, PAMA, SWAPA, TWU

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

SUBJ: ZDC Operations Concerns

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 a ZDC Controller expressing concern about multiple operational issues in the facility. Reporter stated there is no viable contingency plan for sector and/or area closures related to staffing issues, and also highlighted several intra-facility communication issues.

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 Hoey at (408) 541-2854 or email at becky.l.hoey@nasa.gov.



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



ACN 2327058

DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence	202601
Local Time Of Day	0001 to 0600

PLACE

Locale	ZDC.ARTCC
State	VA
Altitude - MSL	2400

AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

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

PERSON 1

Function - Air Traffic Control	Enroute
ASRS Report Number	2327058

EVENTS

Anomaly	ATC Issue - All Types
Anomaly	Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published Material / Policy
Anomaly	Inflight Event / Encounter - Weather / Turbulence
Detector - Person	Air Traffic Control
Result - Air Traffic Control	Provided Assistance

NARRATIVE 1

Aircraft X landing RIC during the night shift transitioning to Approach from the south. Aircraft asked about braking action so I called James River area of Potomac Approach. After the third unanswered call, someone from a different area there picked up and informed me that the James River area was ATC-0 and that Center (me) was expected to transition the aircraft to Tower. No one had informed ZDC Area 2 that James River was ATC-0.

Since I had no direct line to RIC Tower, I found a dial number in the SOP and called. They informed me that Runway 34 was the only runway being plowed and that they'd have an operations vehicle do a braking action check, but that they had no way of getting ahold of me directly. I informed them that I would call back in 10 minutes with an arrival estimate and for a braking action report.

The aircraft informed me that they would have to do the ILS 34. I pulled up the approach plate and noted that the approach started at JUVPO intersection, 8.9 miles from the threshold and that the crossing altitude was 1700 with no procedure turn available. I also noted that the Minimum IFR Altitude (MIA) in that area was 2400. I informed the pilot that he would have to cross that point 700 feet high and the pilot took a minute before informing me that they would attempt the procedure as I described. I gave the pilot alternate contact instructions in case of a missed approach and then switched them to Tower.

I called Tower again to inform them of the aircraft position and approach being used. Once I lost the aircraft on radar at about 200 feet, I waited about 2 minutes and called the Tower back to verify the aircraft had landed.

Also of note: During this time, several areas at ZDC were at ATC-0 due to no staffing because the headquarters refused to use their easiest remedy and pay a couple of controllers to be ready on crew rest (as we had been doing for decades during inclement weather). The Mount Vernon area of Potomac was also ATC-0.

It is criminally negligent that we don't have a viable contingency plan for a sector/area closure due to staffing/emergency. It is criminally negligent that an entire area of a facility closed and no one informed the primary overlying Center sectors. It is criminally negligent that I asked, almost a year ago, to have extended runway centerlines for RDU, RIC, and ORF depicted on a map toggle on our scopes. We had a similar issue on multiple nights with RDU where I asked for this repeatedly.

If there is any chance of us taking over an Approach Control's airspace, there should be a direct line to and from the Tower to the Center sector. How were they supposed to release departures or tell me about ATIS changes? I guess they can call the front desk and hope the Operations Manager in Charge (OMIC) isn't busy?

We should in no way be responsible for an approach procedure where the aircraft can not safely intercept the glideslope due to our altitude restrictions... again. This would be mitigated with displayed extended centerlines. All controllers should be trained annually (actually training off the floor) on the ATC-0 contingency plans for all adjacent airspace. I'd be more than happy to sit in a room with upper management and the "running" things from a desk at headquarters to discuss any of this.

SYNOPSIS

ZDC Center Controller reported having to manage an aircraft's landing at RIC without a direct line to RIC Tower after being informed that an area of PCT TRACON was ATC-Zero due to staffing issues.