COVID Impacts on ATO

NEXTOR-III Webinar Series: Air Navigation Service Providers and Airspace Operations

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COVID Response

- Large numbers of ATO operational employees have contracted COVID
  - Over 400 confirmed cases
- ATO focused on ensuring safety of employees and continuity of operations
- ATO adopted a number of measures to make facilities and the system more resilient
COVID Measures

• Split crews
  • Where possible, ATO separated staff into 2 or 3 crews
  • Split crews reduced as traffic returns
  • 145 facilities are on single crews

• Adjusted hours
  • Where possible, ATO adjusted operational hours to allow split crews and preserve supplies
  • Originally 90 towers; 24 have returned to normal hours

• COVID Joint Crisis Action Team (JCAT)
  • War room which handles all potential COVID cases in operational facilities (>2500 and counting)
  • Directs ATO’s response to COVID cases, facilitating conference calls to ensure timely and consistent response to each case
COVID Mitigation

- Priority flights
  - Initial facility closures were long duration
  - Critical shortages of COVID supplies in the United States
  - Tracked all flights with COVID supplies to ensure successful completion

- COVID cleanings
  - Technical Operations and Acquisitions precoordinated cleaning contractors
  - Cleaning times were reduced from 3 days to 1-2 hours
  - Cleaning lead times were shortened significantly
  - Cleaning times were adjusted to minimize impact on operators
  - Contingency plans

- New COVID contingency procedures were developed to minimize impact
COVID Cleanings

- 174 unique facilities have been cleaned
- 131 ATC-0 events, including 18 centers (ZMA and ZTL 8 each)
IFR Ops Compared to Delay Minutes and MIT Stringency

Comparing IFR Flights to OPSNET Delay Minutes and Stringency MIT

0% is the 2017-2019 Single Point Baselines (per Day)

IFR Flights: 45,586 Flights
Delay Minutes: 59,218 Minutes
Stringency MIT: 26,008 Str. MIT Hours

Date: 10/7/2020
% Difference from the Baseline (Avg Daily)
- IFR Flights: -31.4% (30,737)
- Delay Minutes: -95.7% (2,172)
- Stringency MIT: -93.7% (1,326)

Date: 4/21/2020
% Difference from the Baseline (Avg Daily)
- IFR Flights: -67.5% (14,883)
- Delay Minutes: -99.6% (269)
- Stringency MIT: -99.3% (187)

- Daily data is represented with seven day moving averages
- Comparisons are to 3 year single point baselines
• Traffic managements has become more tactical
• 20 Ground Delay Programs (GDPs) from April 1 – Oct. 14, 2020, compared to 1177 for the same period last year
• 208 Ground Stops (GS), compared to 1536 last year
• Smaller reduction in reroutes, which are used during cleanings
Planning for the Future

- We must remain proficient
- We must continue to train on techniques to handle large traffic volumes
- We must use downturn to improve our understanding of system performance