

VOLUME 2 AIR OPERATOR AND AGENCY CERTIFICATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS

CHAPTER 2 GENERAL INFORMATION FOR AIR CARRIER CERTIFICATION AND FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP APPLICATION

Section 7 International Civil Aviation Organization Company Designators and Telephony Designators (Call Signs)

2-271 GENERAL. This section contains information, direction, and guidance to be used by Operations inspectors when assisting operators with obtaining International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) company designators and telephony designators (call signs) for those operators who request or are required to obtain designators. Commercial, domestic, and international operators use designators for air traffic control (ATC) operations. The Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN) system also uses designators for identification, communication, and billing purposes. The AFTN system is an integrated, international system of aeronautical fixed circuits. The AFTN system provides the exchange of messages and flight plans between aeronautical and fixed stations within the network. The Air Traffic Organization (ATO) headquarters' (HQ) Aeronautical Information Management (AIM) Office (AJV-2) (callsigns@faa.gov) assigns the designators when the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) determines that designators are advantageous and operationally appropriate to the U.S. ATC system. ATO AJV-2 normally assigns the ICAO three-letter company designator and telephony designator as a unit. The four types of designators are titled and described as follows:

- The company designator (ICAO three-letter designator);
- The telephony designator (used instead of phonetically pronouncing the three-letter company designator associated with the aircraft call sign);
- The special telephony designator (special handling); and
- The local telephony designator (local visual flight rules (VFR) operations only).

A. The Company Designator (ICAO Three-Letter Designator). The ICAO company designator is a three-letter designator. The flight number serves as the aircraft identification in the ATC system. The ICAO designator and the company flight number both serve as aircraft identification information in the ATC system. The authorized three-letter designator and flight/trip number are used instead of the aircraft registration number for ATC security and operational purposes and may be used for the international telecommunications service when its use is advantageous. The operator may use the company designator to expedite the exchange of written and computerized air carrier information in both the domestic and international ATC systems to access the stored flight plan program and provide ATC with a quick and accurate means of visual recognition. ATO AJV-2 may assign a three-letter company designator to:

- 1) Scheduled aircraft operators that operate 7 or more nonseasonal international air operations each week or at least 15 nonseasonal, domestic round trip air operations each week;
- 2) Chartered aircraft operators that may require use of the AFTN;
- 3) Aircraft operators that require an ICAO designator for security purposes; or

4) Companies that meet none of these requirements but are deemed worthy of an ICAO three-letter designator (i.e., Veterans Airlift Command).

B. The Telephony Designator (Call Sign). ATO AJV-2 usually assigns the telephony designator call sign at the same time as the ICAO three-letter designator, and the call sign becomes the aircraft identification for air and ground communications with air traffic personnel. Usually, the operator uses the company name or a pronounceable abbreviation of the company name in combination with its flight number for ATC facilities and operating services. An example is “American 411.” This designator replaces the standard type/tail number combination such as “Cessna 398J.” The telephony designator should be phonetically pronounceable in the English language. The name of the aircraft company, operating authority, or servicing organization should resemble the telephony designator, and the designator should not consist of more than two words and three syllables. An advantage of using telephony designators is the reduction of online noise distractions that create similar sounding telephony designator confusion, expedite air and ground communication, provide easy auditory recognition, and reduce the potential for mistakes in verbal communication. The operator must include a new or changed telephony designator in the “Remarks” section of the operator’s flight plans for at least 60 days following the new designator’s effective date.

C. The Special Telephony Designator. ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov), in coordination with ICAO, may temporarily authorize a special telephony designator only when its assignment will identify special handling by ATC. ATO AJV-2 may authorize the special designator for a commemorative flight, a large number of aircraft participating in an organized race, aircraft operating during an emergency or disaster, or aircraft that need special handling for security or test purposes.

D. The Local Telephony Designator. A local telephony designator must be used only for communication with local airport traffic control towers (ATCT) and/or air traffic facilities during VFR operations; they must not be used for filing flight plans.

2-272 APPLICABILITY. Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) does not require that the operator obtain designators; however, the operator’s operations specifications (OpSpecs) may require them. If the FAA chooses to assign a three-letter ICAO company and telephony designator, a special telephony designator or a local telephony designator, ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov) makes the initial approval after checking the requested area of operations for conflict. However, ICAO, which takes into consideration all designators approved throughout the world, makes the final approval of the company designators and telephony designator. ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov) then administers the designator assignment.

2-273 PROCEDURES FOR ASSIGNMENT OF DESIGNATORS. The company makes all requests for designators directly to the appropriate Air Traffic Service Center. ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov) administers final designator assignment.

A. The Company Designator and the Telephony Designator. The operator must submit the following information for the company three-letter designator and the telephony designator request:

- The name and address of the operator;
- The type of aircraft operation or service provided (a list of the operators served is required for service operations);
- The intended use/non-use of AFTN for international services or operations;
- The number and type of AFTN messages handled daily;
- A copy of the operator published flight schedule, monthly flight history, or projected flight schedule, if applicable;
- A copy of the FAA certificate that authorizes the company's operations and states the 14 CFR part under which operations are to be conducted, if applicable; and
- Provision of at least five suggested three-letter designators and telephony designators, listed in their desired order.

B. Special Telephony Designator. Government aircraft operators (U.S. State, local, and law enforcement aircraft) requiring special telephony designators must contact Air Traffic System Operations Security (9-ATOR-HQ-IFOS@faa.gov). All others contact ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov). Operators must submit the following information for the special telephony designator request:

- Type of flight;
- Type of handling required;
- Type and number of aircraft; and
- Routes and duration of operation.

NOTE: Special telephony designators do not receive a three-letter identifier.

C. Local Telephony Designator. Local telephony designators are used only for communications with air traffic facilities for VFR operations as specified in a letter of agreement (LOA) between the local facility or service area and the requesting applicant. The LOA will contain provisions to ensure that the applicant uses local telephony designators only with facilities or service areas that are signatories to the agreement. The appropriate service center must review the LOA, add its recommendations to the letter, and forward the proposed LOA and accompanying recommendations to ATO AJV-2. ATO AJV-2 checks the area of operations for conflict and approves the LOA if there is no conflict of designators. After approval, the service center or facility will issue the signed LOA to the applicant.

2-274 EFFECTIVE DATE AND PUBLICATION. The required administrative period for approval of a three-letter company and telephony designator is approximately 45 calendar-days. ATO AJV-2 establishes an effective date for the designator and enters it into the stored flight plan program. ATO AJV-2 advises the affected FAA facilities that the numbers will be published in FAA and ICAO documents (the current editions of ICAO Doc 8585, Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities, and Services, and FAA Order JO 7340.2, Contractions). Failure to submit the proper documentation may delay a designator assignment.

2-275 CHANGES IN COMPANY STATUS AND CERTIFICATE REVOCATION OR CANCELLATION. When an assigned three-letter company designator and/or telephony designator is no longer required, the company must notify ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov) in

writing. ATO AJV-2 must not reassign any designator it released within 60 calendar-days. Notification of change or release may be made for the following reasons:

- Operations permanently suspended or canceled;
- Change in the name, address, or physical location of the company; and
- Mergers and acquisitions that change or combine any company name holding more than one designator.

A. Revoked or Surrendered Operating Certificate. Principal operations inspectors (POI) must notify ATO AJV-2 (callsigns@faa.gov) when a company operating certificate is revoked or surrendered.

B. Failure to Use Three-Letter Company Designator and Telephony Designator. ATO AJV-2 will place on a watch list any company that does not use an assigned three-letter company designator and telephony designator for 2 years on an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan in U.S.-controlled airspace. ATO AJV-2 will revoke and release any three-letter company designator and telephony designator that are not used for 3 years on an IFR flight plan in U.S.-controlled airspace.

2-276 OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES. Additional information on designators may be found in the current editions of FAA Order JO 7340.2; FAA Order JO 7210.3, Facility Operation and Administration; Advisory Circular (AC) 120-26, International Civil Aviation Organization Three-Letter Designator and Telephony Designator; and ICAO Doc 8585.

RESERVED. Paragraphs 2-277 through 2-295.