Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: ***August 31, 2015 (Original signed document on file)***

To: Air Traffic Organization Service Centers Directors
Air Traffic Organization Air Traffic Service Area Directors

From: [redacted], Director, Air Traffic Procedures, AJV-8

Subject: Interpretation, JO 7110.65, Paragraph 5-4-5, Transferring Controller Handoff

This memorandum is in response to a request for interpretation submitted by the Western Service Area, on behalf of Oakland Air Route Traffic Control Center, regarding Federal Aviation Administration Order (FAAO) JO 7110.65, Paragraph 5-4-5, Transferring Controller Handoff.

The questions asked were: "The issue we have is that there are two differing mindsets regarding the intent. What happens is that one controller will start a handoff to another controller, take the handoff back, make a change and start the handoff again. There are those who believe when you do that, you do not need to coordinate the information that changed and there are those who believe that you do need to coordinate the information that was changed. An interpretation of this paragraph would help to eliminate confusion as to the intent. We do have a facility directive that addresses action to take concerning an intra-facility handoff. Our local safety council is now presented with the question "what about an inter-facility handoff?" Clarification would bring consistency to the way we operate with both inter and intra facility handoffs and allow us to cancel the local directive."

Transferring controllers are not permitted to start a handoff to another controller, take the handoff back, make a change and start the handoff again without verbal coordination, unless otherwise specified in a Letter of Agreement (LOA) or facility directive. FAAO JO 7110.65, paragraph 5-4-5b requires transferring controllers to "verbally obtain the receiving controller's approval prior to making any changes to an aircraft's flight path, altitude, speed, or data block information while the handoff is being initiated or after acceptance, unless otherwise specified by a LOA or a facility directive." This guidance is NAS wide, not specific to an automation platform and not limited to amendments made to a flight plan or data block while the data block is displayed, in handoff mode, on the receiving controllers display. The phrase "while the handoff is being initiated" is not limited to the moment when the data block is displayed on the receiving controllers display. Initiating a handoff causes a transfer of flight data to begin. On some automation platforms, such as the Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS), an amendment made after a handoff is initiated for the first time will not be processed. In situations such as this, a receiving controller would be unaware of any amendments made since the initial handoff. Facilities with different automation capabilities may use an LOA or directive to specify coordination requirements.

Please forward any questions or comments to [redacted], AJV-83 En Route Procedures, [redacted]