



Government Shutdown Will Introduce Risk into the National Airspace System

David Spero, National President of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS), AFL-CIO, released the following statement regarding the government shutdown's impact on aviation safety:

"Once again Congress is missing funding deadlines for the federal government and as of midnight, September 30, the 11,000 employees we represent at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will either be furloughed or working without pay. Reductions in staffing, training, modernization and oversight from these dedicated public servants will introduce risk into the National Airspace System (NAS). In addition, Congress has failed to act on FAA Reauthorization, which also expires tomorrow night.

"Roughly 2,200 aviation safety inspectors will be off the job. These PASS-represented employees in the FAA's Office of Aviation Safety are responsible for the oversight, certification and surveillance of the entire American aviation system, including all general aviation and commercial aircraft, pilots and flight instructors, and repair stations both in this country and abroad. Furloughing the majority of this critical workforce just as the aviation industry has rebounded from the pandemic is neither in the best interest of the nation's economy nor the oversight of the U.S. aviation system.

"In addition, most of the employees PASS represents in the Air Traffic Organization will be on the job without pay—over 5,300—while the rest will be furloughed. Training for these highly-skilled technicians to remain certified and keep up with ever-changing technologies will come to a halt because the FAA's training academy in Oklahoma City will be shuttered. In-person training was severely limited during the COVID-19 pandemic and the airway transportation systems specialists we represent were just beginning to catch up.

"Modernization of the NAS, including upgrades to the beleaguered NOTAM (Notice to Air Missions) system that crashed in January, will also be stopped in its tracks, with training and progress of initiatives suffering delays and considerable setbacks.

"Staffing levels, recruitment and retention continue to be an issue for the FAA and many employees may consider leaving the federal government for the private sector because they see the latter as more stable than the government they have chosen to serve because of these yearly budget fights. That loss of institutional knowledge and expertise would be devastating.

"Aviation plays a critical role in the nation's economy and provides invaluable services to the flying public and the military. The aviation system provides \$1.5 trillion through the commercial aviation industry and 12 million American jobs. A recent release from the [U.S. Travel Association](https://www.travelassociation.org/) estimates that a government shutdown would cost the travel economy \$140 million a day. This is another unnecessary risk to our nation.

"The safety of the flying public depends on mission-focused public servants and that should never be compromised. They need to stay focused on the integrity of the NAS and Washington politics



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should not be a distraction from the important work they do every day. PASS calls on members of Congress to work swiftly to end the inevitable shutdown and allow all employees at the FAA to get back to work to ensure the safety of America's aviation system."