



Lack of Workforce Plans, Inadequate Staffing Lead to Bottlenecks at FAA

Today, David Spero, national president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS), called on Congress to engage with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to address the severe staffing shortages that could impact the safety of the world's largest and most complex air traffic control system.

During the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Aviation Subcommittee hearing on *Eliminating Bottlenecks: Examining Opportunities to Recruit, Retain, and Engage Aviation Talent*, President Spero acknowledged the challenges faced by the agency to recruit and retain employees, especially when considering the staffing of technicians and aviation safety inspectors.

[PASS Testimony](#)

"We have concluded that the agency is not hiring enough of these critical employees and it is a primary bottleneck that limits the opportunities for workers in the FAA," he said.

The PASS leader addressed current staffing shortages at the agency, the failure of the FAA to develop and implement workforce plans in collaboration with the union and inadequate training for the technician workforce. But he also made note that PASS is in negotiations with the FAA for two new contracts. "This presents a significant opportunity for PASS to work with the agency on ways to enhance recruitment and retention," he said.

While the media focuses on the shortage of air traffic controllers when reporting on non-weather-related flight delays, President Spero told lawmakers that the shortage of FAA technicians is just as acute.

The consequence of insufficient technician staffing manifests in increased restoration times during an equipment outage and more air traffic delays for the American flying public. "Having fewer technicians than needed can result in inadequate shift coverage. This means we do not have the right person available to resolve a crisis when it occurs," he told Congress. He cited as an example a ground stop in Chicago earlier this summer that was caused by an issue with a radar system. There was no technician on site with the requisite skills to fix the issue quickly so a brief ground stop was needed until an off-duty technician with that skillset could arrive. When asked about the incident, President Spero made it clear that the staffing at the time was a conscious decision made by the FAA and that the problem would have been resolved immediately if the agency had the right number of people with the right training in place.

As further proof of this point, PASS's testimony called attention to an analysis performed by the FAA that found disturbing connections between the number of FAA technicians and the frequency and duration of corrective maintenance actions.

For the aviation safety inspector workforce represented by PASS, the staffing model currently



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being used by the agency is insufficient to determine the number of aviation safety inspectors needed.

This is concerning especially in light of the events surrounding Boeing. Last month, FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker testified before the Senate Commerce Committee and said more inspectors are being sent to oversee Boeing and its suppliers. While PASS appreciates that the agency recognizes the need for greater oversight at Boeing (PASS has been calling for increased oversight for years), “We do not know where the agency is transferring these inspectors from and if the oversight of other manufacturers or airlines will be impacted,” said President Spero. Simply moving inspectors from other manufacturing environments is not a solution.

PASS concluded by stressing the importance of involving the union in the development of any workforce plan. “PASS recognizes the critical contributions made by the employees we represent,” said President Spero. “As always, we are ready to work to ensure the U.S. air traffic control system remains the safest aviation system in the world.”