



FAA Not Utilizing Key Resource to Modernize—Its Workforce

Today, David Spero, national president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS), testified in front of Congress to address aging systems maintained by employees PASS represents at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); the lack of adequate staffing among the technician workforce and the fact that the agency is not using a vital resource in service to the world's largest and most complex air traffic control system—its own employees.

During the Senate Commerce Aviation Safety, Operations and Innovation Subcommittee hearing on *U.S. Air Traffic Control Systems, Personnel and Safety*, President Spero spoke to the results of a survey it conducted after being asked by the General Accounting Office (GAO) earlier this year for information about 135 FAA systems and equipment that are aging. PASS surveyed its members in the FAA Air Traffic Organization's Technical Operations unit about those 135 systems as front line employees have their hands on that equipment and are most familiar with what is needed to keep them running. [GAO Report](#)

"The survey feedback was both expansive and concerning," said President Spero. The challenges PASS-represented technicians face range from dealing with aging equipment to navigating through cumbersome procedures and limited availability of parts. "The complexity of the systems, compounded by staffing and training inadequacies, further exacerbates the situation," he continued. He was quick to point out that although there are aging systems still in use, these technicians also work on sophisticated, hi-tech, cloud-based systems as well.

[President Spero's testimony](#)

The PASS leader addressed current staffing shortages at the agency and the failure of the FAA to develop and implement a technician workforce plans in collaboration with the union.

"The FAA has been developing the Tech Ops staffing model for over a decade yet they are fully aware that today, they are short at least 800 technicians," Spero said. "While PASS does not agree that the model is factoring in all the necessary data to determine the optimum number of technicians, it clearly reveals an understaffed workforce." This is an issue PASS brought before a House committee earlier this year. While the media focuses on the shortage of air traffic controllers when reporting on non-weather-related flight delays, 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.

The most significant result of the PASS survey was the clear indication that FAA employees, if adequately staffed, are capable and willing to perform the work to ensure successful implementation of new systems and equipment while also maintaining the aging system as efficiently as possible. "The biggest challenge from our perspective is a lack of vision on behalf of the agency," said Spero.



FAA Not Utilizing Key Resource to Modernize—Its Workforce

The FAA is simply not effectively using a key resource to address some of its challenges. “The agency is ignoring the skill level and potential of more than 4,000 employees,” said President Spero. “The resources for the FAA to be more effective are there; the FAA is not taking advantage of them.”

He concluded by stressing that PASS and the employees it represents stand ready to assist lawmakers and the FAA to ensure the safety of the American flying public.