



Government Shutdown Could Jeopardize Modernization of Air Traffic Control System

The Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS) warned today that a government shutdown could jeopardize the administration's plans to modernize the nation's air traffic control system. "At a time when there is much-needed focus and movement to reshape and revamp the nation's air traffic control system, it is troubling that Congress has not been able to pass a continuing resolution or full appropriations bills for fiscal year 2026," said National President Dave Spero.

PASS represents approximately 11,000 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Defense employees throughout the United States and abroad. These employees install, maintain, support and certify air traffic control and national defense equipment, inspect and oversee the commercial and general aviation industries, develop flight procedures, and perform quality analyses of complex aviation systems used in air traffic control in the United States and overseas. The employees at the FAA work in the Aviation Safety directorate, Technical Operations, Air Traffic Services, Mission Support Services and Flight Program Operations.

"The employees PASS represents at the FAA are going to play a critical role in the plans to modernize air traffic control," continued President Spero. "Shutting down the federal government is never in the taxpayers' best interest and certainly not good for the National Airspace System (NAS)."

Of the employees PASS represents, 60% will be on the job but not getting paid. About 30% will be furloughed initially but subject to recall and 10% will be furloughed.

The employees PASS represents across all lines of business at the FAA are understaffed and doing more with less. The Technical Operations workforce will be critical to modernization efforts, and while the agency has plans to hire more technicians, hiring would be put on the back burner. The aviation safety inspector workforce is also understaffed, and the current FAA staffing model falls short in accurately determining the required number of aviation safety inspectors, even in light of the oversight failures at Boeing in recent years. "The FAA needs to be fully staffed at every position if the agency wants to implement the president's vision for modernizing the air traffic control system," said President Spero.

During a shutdown, training for the technician workforce, including new hires, will stop and employees currently at the training academy in Oklahoma City will be recalled. "It can take three to five years to fully train a technician," said President Spero. "Any lapse in training can push the clock back significantly."

The modernization plans are welcomed by PASS and a shutdown, even a brief one, may slow those efforts. The dedicated public servants the union represents want to be a part of this process and need to be on the job, fully staffed and adequately trained. "All of these employees are part of the aviation ecosystem who work on behalf of the American flying public," said President Spero.



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PASS calls on congressional leaders to come together as quickly as possible to resolve the funding issue and have all federal employees get back on the job and paid in a timely manner.