

FAA Statement – Sept. 27, 2014

The Federal Aviation Administration continued to increase the air traffic flow into and out of the Chicago-area airports today, following a criminal incident and fire yesterday at a high-altitude radar facility in Aurora, IL. Air traffic controllers at other FAA facilities safely managed about 60 percent of the flights as compared to last Saturday at O'Hare and over 75 percent of the flights at Midway. The FAA expects a substantial increase in operational capabilities by Monday.

The FAA is working closely with the airlines to manage the traffic flow. The agency also has been able to steadily increase air traffic and reduce delays by improving direct communication between the FAA facilities that are now managing air traffic in the Chicago area, and by developing new methods for automatically filing and transferring airline flight plan information. Air traffic controllers initially had to file flight plans manually after yesterday's fire compromised some communications systems. The FAA is using all other tools at its disposal to reduce disruptions as much as possible.

After inspecting the damaged equipment at the Chicago En Route Center, the FAA has decided to completely replace the central communications network in a different part of the same building, to restore the system as quickly as possible. The FAA is assembling the new components at a remote site, and they will begin to arrive at the center tomorrow. Technicians will work on the installation around the clock, to set up the new equipment, connect it to several undamaged systems, and complete testing. Cleaning crews are also continuing to work around the clock to ensure a safe work environment.

The FAA is developing a timeline for transferring service back to Chicago Center, but in the meantime is working to safely accommodate flights in and out of the Chicago area through its other facilities, significantly reducing impacts on travelers.