



County of Los Angeles  
**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

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DAVID E. JANSSEN  
Chief Administrative Officer

November 22, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen  
Chief Administrative Officer

Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

YVONNE B. BURKE  
Second District

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Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

**LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - RADIO SYSTEM FAILURES**

As directed by your Board on September 21, 2004, I sent correspondence to Ms. Marion C. Blakely, Director of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Mr. Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary of Transportation, on September 30, 2004, regarding the radio system failures that occurred at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) on September 14, 2004. Attached is a response I recently received from Steven B. Zaidman, Vice President, Technical Operations Services, of the Federal Aviation Administration. (The letter incorrectly refers to my correspondence as being dated September 17.)

Mr. Zaidman provides a detailed account of the radio system failures of September 14, 2004 and explains the subsequent actions taken to ensure proper operations of the radio systems. In regards to the request that a hearing take place before a new system is installed at all 21 air traffic control centers around the country, Mr. Zaidman states that the FAA has no plans to install new radio communication equipment at any of the traffic control centers.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call me, or your staff can contact Jerry Ramirez of this office at (213) 974-4282.

DEJ:MKZ  
JR:os

Attachment

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
County Counsel  
Interim Director of Public Works  
Director of Regional Planning



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

Technical Operations Services

800 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20591

NOV 4 2004

Mr. David E. Janssen  
Chief Administrative Officer  
County of Los Angeles  
713 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE  
OFFICE

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Dear Mr. Janssen:

This is in further response to your letter of September 17 about the Los Angeles (ZLA) Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) voice switch failure.

On September 14, ZLA experienced a Voice Switching and Control System (VSCS) failure resulting in total loss of primary air-to-ground (A/G) and ground-to-ground (G/G) communications capability for air traffic control (ATC) purposes. The backup A/G and G/G communications system, VSCS Training and Backup Switch (VTABS) was selected to continue operations. Within minutes of being selected for use, the VTABS failed, resulting in total loss of all communications capability for ATC purposes. Communication capabilities, except commercial phone lines, were completely lost, but all surveillance and flight data processing capabilities still functioned. The loss of all communications at the Los Angeles facility caused a loss of air traffic operations. As a result, the Los Angeles facility personnel used contingency plans allowing external facilities to assume Los Angeles airspace and maintain positive control of aircraft.

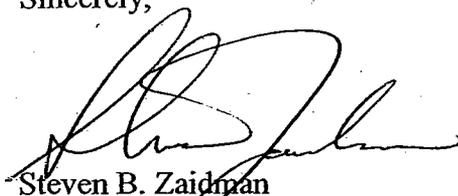
The VSCS provides primary G/G communication capability within the ARTCC and between air traffic facilities, and it provides ground-to-air communications between air traffic controllers and pilots within ARTCC airspace. A subsystem upgrade, the voice switching control subsystem upgrade contained a software coding error that was identified September 12, 2003. Remedial actions were taken on September 24, 2003, to address this problem. Fixing the problem included rebooting equipment and clearing the buffer monthly, and a new software modification (VAO10). VAO10 software baseline verification test was conducted between April 26 and May 17. Formal system testing was conducted between May 24 and June 24, and key site installation and testing at the Seattle ARTCC was completed August 24. The VAO10 software was deployed to the remaining 20 ARTCCs September 30. The software modification has now been completed at 19 ARTCCs, with the last site being modified on October 28. ZLA ARTCC was modified October 3.

A national audit of the ZLA communications outage on September 14 was conducted September 20 through September 23. The complete loss of communications at ZLA was due to the failure of both the primary system and the backup system. The VTABS failure was attributed to improper configuration. All VTABS configurations were validated for currency and proper operation.

We have no plans to install new radio communication equipment at the ARTCCs.

I appreciate your concern for and interest in air traffic safety and assure you that we share the same concerns and strive to maintain the safest air traffic system in the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven B. Zaidman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "Z".

Steven B. Zaidman  
Vice President, Technical Operations Services