



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

GENERAL COUNSEL

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Catherine A. McMullen, Esq.
Chief, Disclosure Unit
U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036-4505

February 24, 2012

Re: OSC File No. DI-08-2777, DI-08-3138, DI-11-0165

Dear Ms. McMullen:

This is in response to a February 9, 2012, e-mail from Karen Gorman in connection with the above referenced matter, requesting a status report on actions taken by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding Wind Measurement Equipment discrepancies and Standard Instrument Departure procedures at Detroit Wayne County Metropolitan Airport.

We initially responded to this request on February 17, 2012. In an email dated February 23, 2012, Ms. Gorman advised that OSC wishes to treat our response as a supplemental report rather than a status update. Accordingly, please treat the attached memoranda as our supplemental report.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Debra Rosen if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Judith S. Kaleta".

Judith S. Kaleta
Assistant General Counsel
for General Law

Enclosure



U.S. Department of
Transportation
Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION:** OIG Investigation
#I11A001SINV, Re: Air Traffic Management at
Detroit Wayne County Metropolitan Airport
(DI-08-2777, DI-08-3138, DI-11-0165)

Date: February 17, 2012

From: 
Ronald C. Engler
Director
Special Investigations, JI-3

Reply to
Attn. of: X6-4189

To: Judith S. Kaleta
Assistant General Counsel for General Law
Office of General Counsel, C-10

Attached is a memorandum from the FAA's Office of Audit and Evaluation, dated January 9, 2012, that responds to OSC's February 9, 2012, email request for additional information on FAA action regarding Wind Measuring Equipment (WME) discrepancies and Standard Instrument Departure (SID) procedures at Detroit Wayne County Metropolitan Airport (DTW). FAA's memorandum includes two action items that were scheduled for completion in January. Below is an update on those items:

(1) Deployment of the WME software update.

Status: Deployment of the WME software update did not occur in January 2012. Personnel changes at the facility delayed deployment and supplemental coordination efforts were necessary. The project is running about 30-days behind its January 2012 expected release date. An FAA headquarters-level manager is now tracking this effort and is cognizant of the project's importance to DTW operations.

(2) Testing of the SID.

Status: Testing of the new SID was deemed unnecessary and the procedure is being processed for publication. The Detroit Terminal Radar Approach Control and the controller's union agreed the procedure will be implemented on February 27, 2012. Automation of the procedure will occur after it is formally published.



Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: January 9, 2012

To: Ronald Engler, Director of Special Investigations, Office of Inspector General

From: H. Clayton Foushee, Director, Office of Audit & Evaluation, x79440

Subject: Follow-up Status Report, Air Traffic Management at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW); ref: Office of Inspector General (OIG) Investigation No. I11A001SINV; our memo dated September 9, 2011

This memo provides our status update for the allegations described in your OIG report of investigation (ROI) dated Aug. 26, 2011, following the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) referral of File No. DI-11-0165. This update addresses the two remaining allegations, numbers 2 and 3, for which corrective actions are still ongoing.

Allegation 2: *"The Automated Surface Observing System and Wind Measuring Equipment in Detroit continue to display significantly different wind measurements, resulting in an "unsafe and untenable situation for controllers and the flying public."*

Updated Response: The FAA is still analyzing the necessary steps to designate the wind measuring equipment (WME) as the primary airport wind information source. Since the Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) feeds wind information to the Automated Terminal Information Service and the Information Display System used by pilots and controllers, the designation of the WME as primary necessitates other system and procedure changes.

To help isolate some of the wind information discrepancies noted by the complainant, the FAA has developed a software update for the WME that allows easier archiving and recovery of historical WME wind information. The software update is currently being tested at Will Rogers World Airport, (OKC), and at the program support facility, Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, both located in Oklahoma City, OK. Successful test results will support a deployment of the WME software update to DTW during January 2012. Once the WME software update is installed and tested at DTW, the facility will be able to quickly recover and compare wind information from both the WME and ASOS following a significant difference in wind readings noted by the operational staff at DTW. With the capability to compare the historical wind information from both wind sensor systems, we believe the observed differences between systems will improve understanding of the wind information available to the operational personnel. Our goal is to eliminate random wind sensor differences and to raise the confidence in our systems essential to air traffic services.

Allegation 3: *“Air Traffic Controllers are unable to electronically issue Standard Instrument Departures to aircraft departing Detroit for several airports in Ohio, resulting in a “substantial and specific danger to public safety.”*

Updated Response: Although you were unable to substantiate this allegation, we feel that there are both safety and efficiency benefits to publishing standard instrument departures (SID) to airport locations that are frequent destinations. The FAA has developed a standard instrument departure (SID) with the intention to make this SID available when aircraft depart from DTW heading towards Ohio and beyond. The trial period for these new SID is intended to begin in January 2012, and last for 30 days. Coordination with the adjoining En Route facilities is underway; a notice-to-airmen (NOTAM) message is ready to announce the trial period, and DTW is prepared to approve the SID change once the trial period expires. Validating the SID is necessary to verify it creates positive changes without unintended consequences.

Based on the trial results, and once DTW concurs the SID change satisfies their needs, the FAA will publish and distribute the new procedures to maximize the availability and benefits. The planned title of the SID will be the “Fort Wayne Five.” As mentioned in our Sep. 9, 2011 submission, it routinely takes several months to complete the processes covered by our existing policy, FAA Order 8260.43, “Flight Procedures Management Program,” and to bring about a published SID that has been flight-checked. Once the SID is validated, it is scheduled for publication through the Digital Aeronautical Charts Supplement (DACS) that is published on a 28-day recurring frequency. Every air traffic facility receives the DACS and enters the appropriate changes to their local automation system; a Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS) automation system located at the Detroit Terminal Radar Approach Control (D21 TRACON) serves DTW. If the proposed SID change is validated, the publication will likely occur on Apr. 5, 2012 or later. Once published, the DTW automation will include the necessary abbreviations and links to permit the air traffic controllers to electronically issue the SID to aircraft departing DTW towards Ohio.

We agree with your conclusion that neither the SID to Ohio airports or wind sensor readings constitute a substantial or specific danger to public safety, but we are committed to the actions described here to improve the timely release of aircraft from DTW and raising the confidence of controllers that depend on our wind systems necessary to improve safety and efficiency.

We will provide your office with quarterly updates until the ASOS/WME and SID corrective actions are completed. If you desire additional information, please contact Joseph Teixeira, Vice President, ATO Safety & Technical Training, at (202) 267-3341.

cc: Vice President, Mission Support Services
Vice President, Terminal Services
Vice President, Technical Operations Services
Chief Operating Officer