

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAA Extends Tower Closure Date

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced today that it will delay the closures of all 149 federal contract air traffic control towers until June 15. Last month, the FAA announced it would eliminate funding for these towers as part of the agency's required \$637 million budget cuts under sequestration.

This additional time will allow the agency to attempt to resolve multiple legal challenges to the closure decisions. As part of the tower closure implementation process, the agency continues to consult with airports and operators and review appropriate risk mitigations. Extending the transition deadline will give the FAA and airports more time to execute the changes to the National Airspace System.

"This has been a complex process and we need to get this right," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "Safety is our top priority. We will use this additional time to make sure communities and pilots understand the changes at their local airports."

As of today, approximately 50 airport authorities and other stakeholders have indicated they may join the FAA's non-Federal Contract Tower program and fund the tower operations themselves. This additional time will allow the FAA to help facilitate that transition.

"We will continue our outreach to the user community to answer any questions and address their concerns about these tower closures," said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta.

On March 22, the FAA announced that it would stop federal funding for 149 contract towers across the country. A phased, four-week closure process was scheduled to begin this Sunday, April 7. That phased closure process will no longer occur. Instead, the FAA will stop funding all 149 towers on June 15 and will close the facilities unless the airports decide to continue operations as a nonfederal contract tower.

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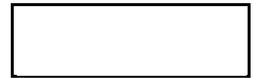
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