



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

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20591

June 14, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to you to convey the urgency with which the aviation industry must treat the installation of radio frequency filters on radio altimeters throughout the fleet. As you know, Verizon and AT&T committed in January to a number of voluntary mitigations, including turning off hundreds of wireless transmitters, for a period of six months.

That date – July 5, 2022 – is rapidly approaching.

The wireless companies have signaled an openness to continuing voluntary signal-strength mitigations around a number of critical airports. However, they also have indicated a desire to press forward within certain markets beginning in July. As you know from the technical discussions, when this happens, less capable aircraft that now have Alternate Methods of Compliance for these airports will be unable to access them without filter retrofits.

The Federal Aviation Administration is in the early stages of working with AT&T and Verizon to identify markets where either a new tower or an increase in signal power will cause the least disruption, but there are no guarantees that all large markets will retain the current mitigations. We hope to have more details at our next roundtable meeting on June 17.

During the course of the three recent roundtables that your representatives have participated in, industry stakeholders identified a pathway to retrofit the first two groups of aircraft with the most vulnerable radio altimeters by the end of 2022. We are working toward an equally aggressive schedule that would necessitate the completion of retrofits for the third and largest group in 2023.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns that some aircraft might eventually have to undergo additional retrofits. The wireless companies assure us that the equipment capable of transmitting at the maximum power levels approved by the FCC is still being developed and will not be ready for widespread use for three to five years. However, without additional action by the FCC to cap transmissions at currently attainable power levels, the prospect of additional disruption remains and we are not in any position to offer assurances.

As the situation stands, Verizon and AT&T plan to pursue a full rollout of their networks by the end of 2023. Another 19 companies licensed by the FCC are expected to enter the market during that timeframe, hopefully employing some level of the voluntary mitigations that have enabled our progress so far.

Regardless, the dynamic nature of this situation underscores the need for the aviation industry to move with all due haste to protect the fleet against known vulnerabilities to 5G C-band interference. Some operators have begun these retrofits, and I thank and congratulate them for their willingness to move quickly and take this necessary step.

I am confident we can achieve success for both the aviation and telecommunications industries while we also work within the federal interagency process to provide additional certainty about longer-term solutions.

I am sure I can count on your personal involvement in ensuring that the retrofits within your fleets are completed as soon as safely possible and I look forward to working with you in this pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Billy Nolen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Billy Nolen  
Acting Administrator

cc: Nicholas E. Calio, President and CEO  
Airlines for America

George Novak, President  
National Air Carrier Association

Faye Malarkey Black, President and CEO  
Regional Airline Association