

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
Air Traffic Organization Policy

N JO 7210.703

Effective Date:
December 8, 2008

Cancellation Date:
August 27, 2009

SUBJ: Capping and Tunneling

- 1. Purpose of This Notice.** This notice clarifies capping and tunneling procedures. This guidance will be incorporated into the traffic management procedures in the Federal Aviation Administration Order (FAAO) 7210.3V, Facility Operation and Administration, Chapter 17, Traffic Management National, Center, and Terminal.
- 2. Audience.** This notice applies to the following Air Traffic Organization (ATO) service units: En Route and Oceanic, Terminal, and System Operations Services, including the Directors of Tactical Operations and traffic management officers; and the international aviation field offices.
- 3. Where Can I Find This Notice?** The notice is available on the MYFAA employee Web site at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices/ and on the air traffic publications Web site at http://www.faa.gov/airports_airtraffic/air_traffic/publications.
- 4. Explanation of Policy Change.** Capping and tunneling provide FAA air traffic facilities and our customers increased flexibility in responding to conditions in the National Airspace System (NAS). This change further clarifies the procedures and responsibilities of the David J. Hurley Air Traffic Control System Command Center (ATCSCC) and the air route traffic control center (ARTCC) traffic management units (TMU).
- 5. Procedures.** Amend FAAO 7210.3V by adding Paragraph 17-6-15, Capping and Tunneling, as follows:

17-6-15 CAPPING AND TUNNELING

a. ARTCCs must:

1. Provide a basic capping and tunneling plan in coordination with affected TRACON for all airports listed in the Operational Evolution Partnership, as a minimum.
2. Develop, maintain, coordinate, and modify all capping and tunneling plans with the TMU, the ATCSCC, and affected facilities within or adjacent to their area of jurisdiction.
3. Complete capping and tunneling plans by March 1, 2009, and update their plans biannually, no later than May 1 and November 1 of each calendar year.
4. Include in the plan:
 - (a) A description of planned capping and tunneling procedures that may be used within the departure ARTCC airspace.
 - (b) Directions of use (for example, North Plan, South Plan, etc.).
 - (c) Altitudes, including expected start and/or end points of capping and tunneling actions.

(d) Routes and distances of expected use.

(e) Information concerning how and when the plan affects arrivals, departures, terminal or en route airspace.

(f) All facilities impacted.

b. ARTCC TMUs must:

1. Submit facility capping and tunneling plans to the ATCSCC Automation Office for inclusion in the Operational Information System by May 15 and November 15 of each calendar year. This will allow facilities and customers to evaluate the impact of these plans and any possible strategic and tactical options to them.

2. Coordinate capping and tunneling plans through the ATCSCC before implementation.

3. Coordinate issues, alternate initiatives, and exit strategies with the ATCSCC and affected facilities.

NOTE-

Capping and tunneling can provide a rapid solution to some situations; however, consideration needs to be given to potential weather constraints, such as turbulence and icing, and the effects of fuel and flight time for the aircraft included.

4. Provide local information to aid the ATCSCC with developing alternative, successful reroute options for customers to consider, as needed.

5. Implement tactical initiatives and update as necessary, for example, MIT/MINIT.

6. Coordinate changes or cancellation of capping and tunneling plans with the ATCSCC and affected facilities.

c. The ATCSCC must:

1. Respond to requests for the implementation of the capping and tunneling plan and evaluate possible alternatives.

2. Notify affected facilities and customers of capping and tunneling implementation and the airports, routes, and/or airspace that will be impacted.

3. Transmit planned advisories before implementation of capping and tunneling, when applicable. Provide details regarding distance and altitude information, when available.

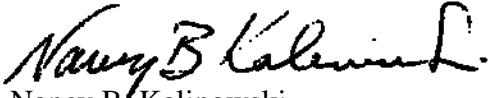
4. Transmit required advisories to implement capping and tunneling plans. This advisory should specify airports included, alternate routes and options as able, expected duration, transition points (route or altitude), reason for implementation, and modifications to the plan.

5. Evaluate and advise affected facilities and customers of cancellation of capping and tunneling initiatives, as appropriate.

6. Distribution. This notice is distributed to the following ATO service units: En Route and Oceanic, Terminal, Safety, and System Operations Services, including the Directors of Tactical Operations and traffic management officers; the William J. Hughes Technical Center; the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center; international aviation field offices; and the Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service.

7. Background. Capping and tunneling are processes of using altitude restrictions to manage traffic volume and delays. Tunneling aircraft indicates that traffic will be descended before the normal descent point at the arrival airport and capping indicates that aircraft will be cleared to an altitude lower than requested to their arrival airport or until they are clear of a particular airspace. These procedures allow

air traffic flows to be optimized by increasing use of available altitudes. This removes traffic volume from higher tiered airspace and reduces delays by allowing sectors with more capacity to control this traffic. This traffic management initiative has proven to be effective in mitigating constraints throughout the NAS. Many FAA facilities have developed capping and tunneling plans, and have local processes for the use and implementation of them to manage their traffic and meet the objectives specific to their situation. The purpose of this notice is to provide national requirements and guidelines for the use of capping and tunneling initiatives, their development, maintenance, implementation, and cancellation, and to standardize the process between facilities and our customers.



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11-7-08

Date Signed