

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: July 15, 1976

Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-76-91 and 92

On April 1, 1976, Hughes Airwest Flight 5 and Northwest Airlines Flight 603 almost collided in midair over the Spokane International Airport, Spokane, Washington. The National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of the near collision revealed that both flightcrews misunderstood the radar services being provided by Fairchild Air Force Base RAPCON and Spokane Tower. The Spokane Tower is not radar equipped and Fairchild RAPCON is capable only of providing limited, low-altitude radar coverage of the airport because of blind spots.

The flightcrews' misunderstanding of radar services being provided appears to have been justified based on information contained in Chapter 3 of the Airman's Information Manual, "Arrival-IFR." The following is excerpted from that Chapter:

". . .after passing the final approach fix on final approach, aircraft are expected to proceed direct to the airport and complete the approach or effect the missed approach procedure published for that airport. Radar service is automatically terminated when the landing is completed or the tower controller has the aircraft in sight, whichever occurs first."

There is no ready reference to alert a pilot that a control tower is not radar equipped. Consequently, when his flight transitions from a radar-monitored situation to a nonradar-monitored situation, it is not evident to a pilot that the advisory in the Airman's Information Manual does not apply.

Radar approach control service for Spokane International Airport is provided by Fairchild RAPCON. Arrival and departure procedures for the Airport are outlined in a letter of agreement between Fairchild RAPCON and Spokane Tower, effective on July 1, 1974. However, since the Spokane

tower cab is not equipped with radar and since Fairchild RAPCON is capable only of providing limited, low-altitude radar coverage, the letter of agreement failed to provide for positive separation between arriving and departing aircraft.

Although the deficiencies have been eliminated by a Fairchild RAPCON/Spokane Tower Order dated April 8, 1976, and by a GENOT issued by the Federal Aviation Administration on April 7, 1976, the Safety Board believes that positive steps must be taken to review arrival and departure procedures at other terminal areas where radar and nonradar operations interface. Procedural review and correction should be controlled centrally rather than locally.

Consequently, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Revise the Airman's Information Manual so that the aviation community will not be misled regarding radar approach control services at locations where the tower cab is not radar equipped and the approach control facility has limited, low-altitude radar coverage capability. (Class II--Priority followup.) (A-76-91)

Review local departure and arrival procedures at all airports where radar and nonradar operations interface and assure that they provide positive separation between aircraft. (Class II--Priority followup.) (A-76-92)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members concurred in the above recommendation.

Philip Allison Hogue
for

By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.