ICAO RACF Workshop

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ATC CONTINGENCY PLAN — EXAMPLE

A practical example of how an impacted air traffic facility and its designated supporting facility coordinate alert, service interruption, continuity, restoration, and cancellation.

EXAMPLE — NOT AN OPERATIONAL CHECKLIST

1 | ATC-Alert Notification

ATC-Alert is a precautionary notification when normal operations continue but a disruptive condition or loss of redundancy may indicate a potential interruption in services.

Choose the Disruptive Condition or System Trigger

■ Loss of Surveillance

■ Loss of Communication

■ Loss of Telephony

■ Loss of Automation

■ Loss of Power

■ Unresponsive Facility

■ Staffing

Initiating an alert

Identify the disruptive condition, potential traffic impact, actions underway, and expected update interval. Notify the designated contacts and record UTC and initials for each call.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Primary supporting facility / operational contact	_____	_____
■	Technical Operations	_____	_____
■	National Coordination	_____	_____
■	Air Traffic Manager	_____	_____
■	Executive Officer	_____	_____
■	Operations Manager / watch supervision	_____	_____
■	Regional Operations Center	_____	_____
■	Operations Control Center	_____	_____

2 | Affected Facilities and Alert Follow-Up

Affected and supporting facilities — example notification categories

Supporting and adjacent centers: ARTCC

Surrounding FIRs / international facilities:

Control towers and local aerodrome facilities:

The operational version identifies the affected facilities, designated contacts, and approved telephone numbers. Contact numbers are intentionally omitted here.

Follow-up actions

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Notify affected supporting and surrounding facilities	_____	_____
■	Record alert and subsequent actions in the Facility Log	_____	_____
■	Advise on-site personnel of the alert	_____	_____
■	Evaluate precautionary traffic management initiatives	_____	_____
■	Assess personnel safety and account for occupants if necessary	_____	_____
■	Monitor for escalation to ATC-Limited or ATC-Zero	_____	_____

3 | ATC-Alert Cancellation — Close the Loop

When the disruptive condition has been resolved, close the communication loop by contacting the same functional positions and affected facilities that received the initial alert. Coordinate with appropriate technical and operational personnel, and log all notifications, decisions, and cancellation actions in the Facility Log.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Confirm the disruptive condition is resolved	_____	_____
■	Coordinate with Technical Operations and necessary personnel	_____	_____
■	Notify the same management, operational, and support contacts as the original alert	_____	_____
■	Notify affected control towers, supporting centers, and surrounding FIRs as applicable	_____	_____
■	Cancel precautionary traffic management initiatives where appropriate	_____	_____
■	Log all actions, calls, UTC, initials, and cancellation details in the Facility Log	_____	_____

4 | Crisis Response Teams (CRT)

Impacted facility CRT

The impacted facility identifies critical personnel who direct the emergency response, coordinate decisions, safeguard personnel, and manage continuity and restoration. The controlled operational plan identifies the assigned individuals.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Air Traffic Manager (ATM)	_____	_____
■	Operations Manager-in-Charge / Operations Supervisor / Controller-in-Charge	_____	_____
■	System Support Center Manager	_____	_____
■	Supervisory Traffic Management Coordinator	_____	_____
■	Bargaining-unit representative(s)	_____	_____
■	Executive Officer	_____	_____

Supporting facility CRT

The supporting facility maintains a copy of the impacted facility's contingency plan. Its own CRT can implement designated notifications, coordination, and support tasks if the impacted facility is unable to act.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Supporting facility Air Traffic Manager	_____	_____
■	Supporting facility watch supervision	_____	_____
■	Supporting facility technical support lead	_____	_____
■	Supporting facility traffic management coordinator	_____	_____
■	Supporting facility workforce representative(s)	_____	_____

5 | ATC-Zero Declaration

ATC-Zero applies when the facility cannot provide the relevant air traffic services or when services are transferred under the applicable contingency framework.

Response levels — estimated time for restoration at the normal location

• **Level 1:** Repair or recovery time is uncertain.

• **Level 2:** Repair or recovery time is less than one day.

• **Level 3:** Repair or recovery time is more than one day but less than one month.

• **Level 4:** Repair or recovery time is one month or longer.

Declaration and coordination

Complete the following actions in the order shown. Actions may be completed concurrently. If the impacted facility cannot perform an action, request the **supporting facility** to assist with notifications, formation of the Crisis Response Team (CRT), NOTAM issuance, or other requested tasks.

1. Form a CRT chaired by the Air Traffic Manager (ATM) as soon as practical, according to the circumstances of the disruption.

2. Make the declaration to the designated contacts in priority order to the extent possible and simultaneously when feasible. If normal communications are unavailable, use an approved alternate communication method.

When known, include necessary traffic management measures, actions being taken, potential impacts on air traffic, expected timeline for updates, and a callback or alternate communication method.

Declaration notification checklist

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Primary supporting facility	_____	_____
■	Technical Operations	_____	_____
■	National coordination	_____	_____
■	Air Traffic Manager / Executive Officer	_____	_____
■	Operations management / watch supervision	_____	_____
■	Operations Control Center / Regional Operations Center	_____	_____
■	Adjacent centers / surrounding FIRs	_____	_____
■	Affected control towers / local facilities	_____	_____
■	Other designated operational partners	_____	_____

5 | ATC-Zero Declaration (continued)

3. Issue an ATC-Zero Domestic (D) NOTAM

Coordinate issuance through Flight Service using the designated contact channel in the operational plan. The example below shows the format of a service-status NOTAM without operational contact details or frequencies.

ATC ZERO D NOTAM — EXAMPLE

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SVC [IMPACTED APP/ARTCC] CLSD. [AFFECTED AIRSPACE] SER INVOLVING VFR ACFT NOT AVBL. CTC [SUPPORTING FACILITY] FOR ARR COM ON [APPROVED FREQUENCY].
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Use additional notices as appropriate for other affected control towers or airspace. The approved operational plan contains the applicable NOTAM wording, contacts, and frequencies.

4. Record the declaration

Log the declaration, notifications, decisions, and actions in the **Facility Log**.

5. Determine the nature of the event

• Loss of Surveillance

• Loss of Communication

• Loss of Telephony

• Loss of Automation

• Loss of Power

• Evacuation

• Unresponsive facility (no contact or response)

• Staffing (significant reduction in staffing)

6–8. Personnel safety and evacuation

6. Address any potential danger or threat to personnel.

7. Account for all employees and occupants.

8. If evacuation is required, follow the Facility Security Plan (FSP). The decision to evacuate is made by the ATM or designee. If feasible, have controllers initiate the approved Account For/Transfer Control of Aircraft procedures. Retain the Facility Log, FSP, and Operational Contingency Plan (OCP) as practicable. After personnel and visitors are safe and accounted for, execute applicable OCP procedures.

6 | ATC-Zero Response and Supporting Facility

9–11. Operational briefing and monitoring

9. Brief controllers that ATC-Zero is in effect and confirm they understand the applicable procedures.

10. Ensure implementation of the remaining applicable OCP actions and procedures.

11. Monitor the disruptive event, obtain technical status updates, and reassess operational conditions.

Impacted facility response checklist

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Assess event and potential personnel safety issues	_____	_____
■	Account for personnel and occupants	_____	_____
■	Brief controllers on ATC-Zero status and procedures	_____	_____
■	Coordinate necessary service-status NOTAMs	_____	_____
■	Implement applicable contingency procedures	_____	_____
■	Monitor technical status and changing conditions	_____	_____
■	Record decisions and actions in the Facility Log	_____	_____

Supporting facility responsibilities

The supporting facility maintains a copy of the impacted facility's contingency plan and can execute assigned actions when requested or when the impacted facility is unable to do so.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Confirm the need for support and activate the supporting CRT	_____	_____
■	Assist with notifications and declarations as appropriate	_____	_____
■	Coordinate required service-status NOTAMs	_____	_____
■	Support contingency coordination and operational updates	_____	_____
■	Record each notification with UTC and initials	_____	_____
■	Document decisions and actions in the Facility Log	_____	_____

7 | Account for Aircraft / Transfer Control

The operational plan defines how control personnel stabilize airspace, account for aircraft, and coordinate transfer or adjustment of control responsibilities. It also establishes how traffic can be restricted or maintained at a reduced rate through prearranged coordination.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Assess the disruption and begin approved stabilization procedures	_____	_____
■	Coordinate appropriate traffic restrictions	_____	_____
■	Account for affected aircraft	_____	_____
■	Coordinate transfers of control with affected facilities	_____	_____
■	Determine whether reduced-capacity services can be maintained	_____	_____
■	Document significant decisions and coordination	_____	_____

Pre-coordinated route placeholders

Overflight routes: [Insert approved pre-coordinated route(s)]

Arrival routes: [Insert approved pre-coordinated arrival route(s)]

Departure routes: [Insert approved pre-coordinated departure route(s)]

Associated constraints: [Insert approved parameters in controlled operational plan]

8 | Continuity of Operations

After initial stabilization, the impacted and supporting facilities determine which services can continue safely. The actual plan provides scenario-specific arrangements.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Determine available and sustainable services	_____	_____
■	Coordinate reduced-capacity operations, if feasible	_____	_____
■	Confirm responsibilities among impacted, supporting, and adjacent facilities	_____	_____
■	Use approved pre-coordinated route frameworks as appropriate	_____	_____
■	Provide operational updates to affected facilities	_____	_____
■	Reassess conditions and revise arrangements as necessary	_____	_____
■	Consider extended continuity arrangements if restoration is delayed	_____	_____

Affected and supporting facilities — example notification categories

Supporting and adjacent centers: ARTCC

Surrounding FIRs / international facilities:

Control towers and local aerodrome facilities:

The operational version identifies the affected facilities, designated contacts, and approved telephone numbers.

9 | Supporting Facility Continuity Checklist

The supporting facility's checklist is designed to prevent surprise: its personnel know the plan, understand their assigned responsibilities, and can act in coordination with the impacted facility's CRT.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Brief supporting facility personnel	_____	_____
■	Confirm applicable supporting-facility responsibilities	_____	_____
■	Coordinate traffic management actions	_____	_____
■	Make approved supporting-facility procedures available to relevant personnel	_____	_____
■	Coordinate any agreed transfer or adjustment of services	_____	_____
■	Monitor the contingency arrangement and provide updates	_____	_____
■	Record notifications, UTC, initials, and decisions in the Facility Log	_____	_____

10 | Restoration and Return to Normal Services

Recovery is a coordinated transition. The impacted facility and supporting facility verify readiness and agree on how responsibilities will be returned safely.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Confirm facility and personnel safety	_____	_____
■	Coordinate with Technical Operations and CRT	_____	_____
■	Verify operational readiness of required systems and communications	_____	_____
■	Confirm staffing and operating-position readiness	_____	_____
■	Review traffic conditions and remaining restrictions	_____	_____
■	Coordinate an orderly return of responsibility	_____	_____
■	Notify affected control towers, adjacent centers, and surrounding FIRs	_____	_____
■	Document transition actions in the Facility Log	_____	_____

11 | ATC-Zero Cancellation and Final Notifications

Cancellation closes the event only after appropriate restoration conditions are met. The original notification chain is used to ensure all affected parties receive the updated status.

✓	Action / notification	UTC	Initials
■	Confirm restoration and service status	_____	_____
■	Notify the supporting facility	_____	_____
■	Notify operational management and technical support	_____	_____
■	Notify affected control towers and local facilities	_____	_____
■	Notify adjacent centers and surrounding FIRs	_____	_____
■	Cancel temporary measures and notices as appropriate	_____	_____
■	Record each notification with UTC and initials	_____	_____
■	Log final actions and cancellation in the Facility Log	_____	_____

12 | How Another ANSP Can Adapt This Framework

The following principles summarize the transferable elements of this contingency planning approach. Each ANSP can adapt them to its operational environment:

* Identify disruptive conditions and define escalation criteria.
* Designate a supporting facility and agree on its responsibilities.
* Establish Crisis Response Teams at the impacted and supporting facilities.
* Maintain notification directories and timestamped operational checklists.
* Develop pre-coordinated airspace stabilization and continuity arrangements.
* Coordinate with control towers, adjacent centers, and surrounding FIRs.
* Exercise contingency procedures with relevant operational partners.
* Plan for restoration, return of responsibilities, and formal close-out.

Key takeaway

A contingency plan is most effective when it is coordinated in advance, understood by both facilities, documented during execution, and designed to support a safe, orderly return to normal services.