Aviation Safety

Surveillance Activities during COVID-19

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FAA Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service (AOV)

Federal Aviation Administration

FAA's Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service

FAA's Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service (AOV) establishes safety standards and provides independent oversight of the Air Traffic Organization (ATO), the Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) in the United States.

Safety oversight is accomplished in a variety of ways including:

- Validating the Air Traffic Organization safety related processes used for introduction of new separation standards, and modification of existing separation standards;
- Approving new standards, waivers, extension and modification of existing waivers;
- Analyzing and authorizing controls used by the Air Traffic Organization to mitigate hazards;
- Participating in operational review and analysis of information pertaining to the Air Traffic Organization employees, operations and programs.
- Developing and amending regulations and guidance for regulatory oversight and credentialing functions;
- Participating in the development and harmonization of air traffic control international standards;
- Providing regulatory oversight of the Air Traffic Organization Safety Management System.

Our Strategy – AOV 2025

- **Our collaborative approach to implementing a risk-based, data-driven safety oversight model**

  - Collaboratively developed w/stakeholder input – FY21 launch

  - Emphasizes shared responsibility for safety

  - Expands oversight activities

    - ATO SMS activities – "how ATO achieves safety performance"

    - Total system – integrate across safety offices

    - Independence
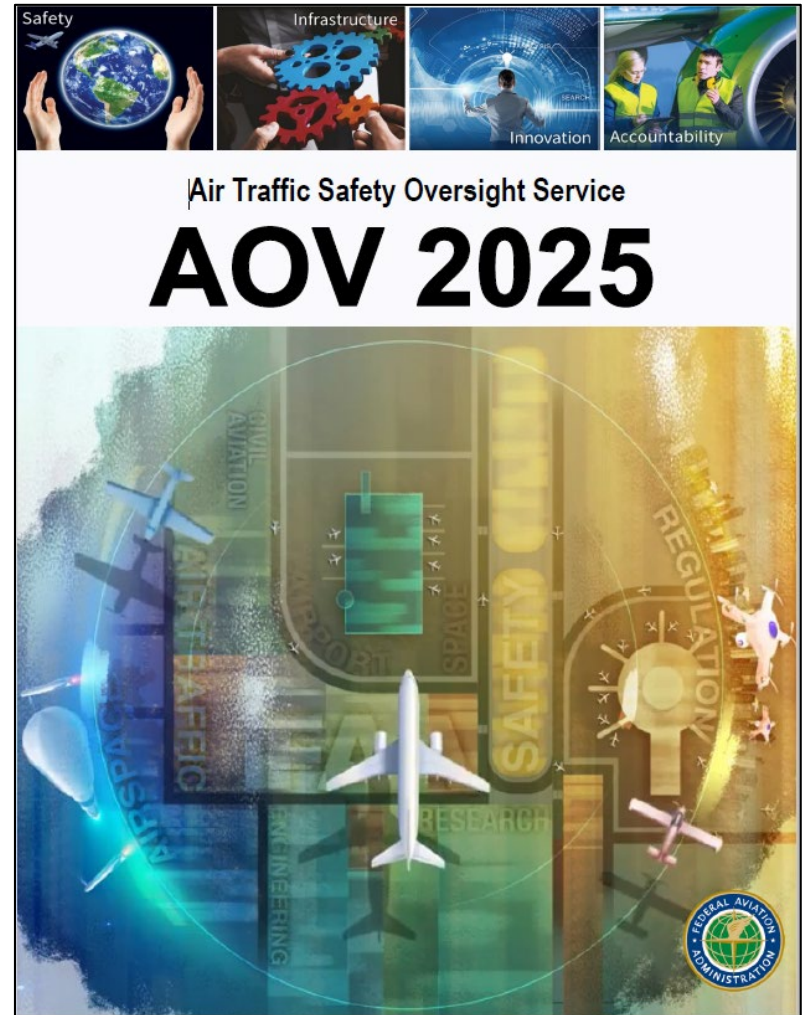
Airport Operations Before and During COVID

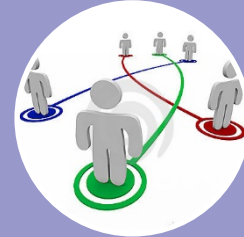Month by Month Comparison of Airport Ops
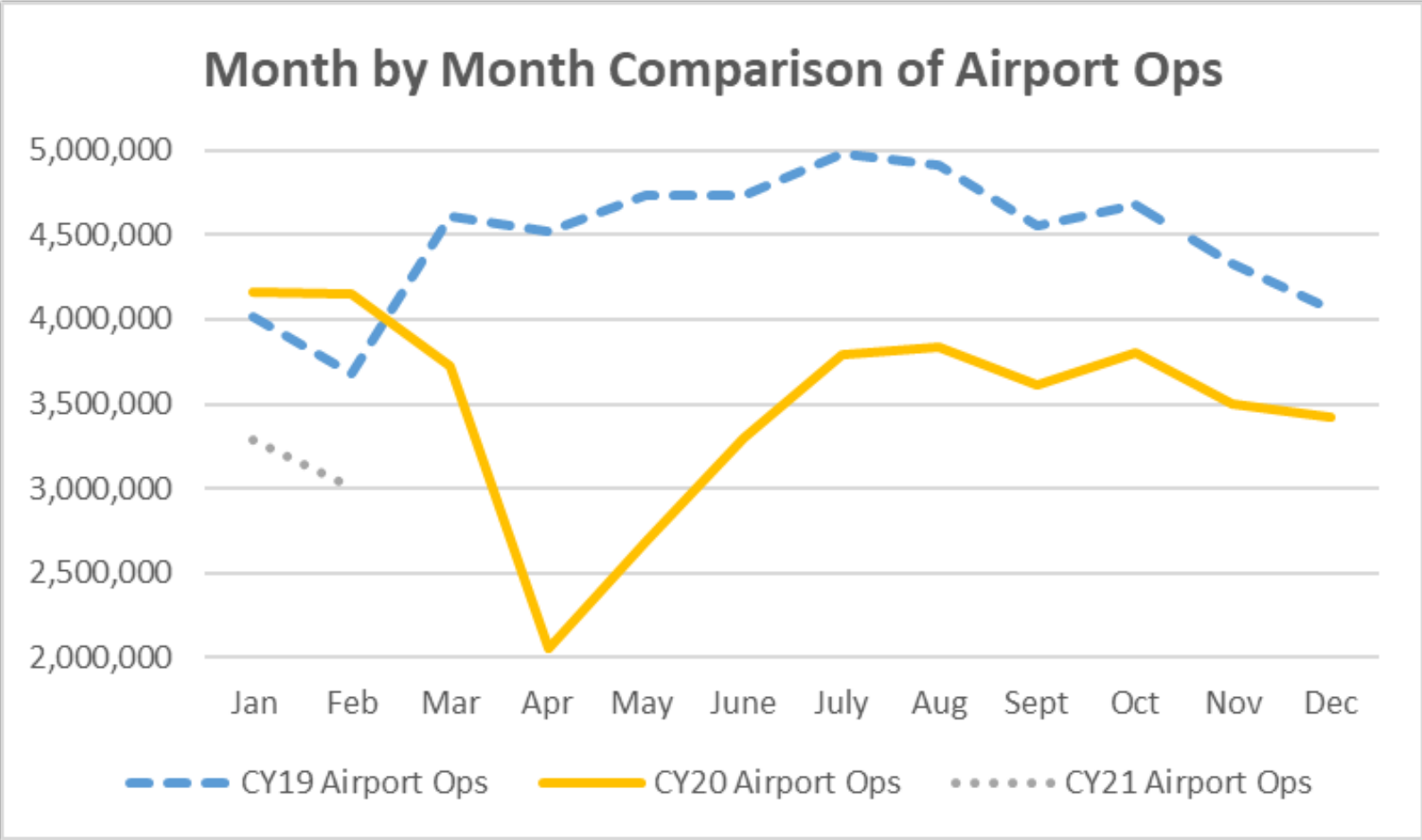
Responding to COVID

Aligning responses with health requirements

Responding to the rapid changes as regulator

Connecting to international approaches

Risk-Based Oversight Model

Risk Assessment
- Operation Portfolios
- Change – Configuration Mgmt
- Risk Management
- SMS Key Perf. Indicators
- Independent Hazard ID
- System Performance
- Risk Profile
- "How is ATO achieving safety performance?"
- "What is keeping them safe?"

Informed Oversight Plan

Oversight Activities
- Audit
- Assessment
- Monitoring
- Observation
- AAC Process

Safety Risk Management

- FAA's safety risk management program includes hazard identification, risk assessment, risk-control decision making, and a hazard tracking and risk resolution process

- Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service must approve controls that are defined to mitigate or eliminate initial or current high-risk hazards before ATO can implement the change

Pre-COVID Statistics

- Audits & Assessments
  - 2019: 4 Audits, 4 Assessments

- Reviews
  - Reviewed all FAA air traffic control tower standard operating procedures that catalogued methods of memory aids used and their compliance with FAA order on Facility Operation and Administration, section 10-1-7, Use of Active Runways (JO 7210.3AA)

Surveillance Activities during COVID

- Collaborative approach with service provider
- Desk audits in place of in person audits
  - Terminal Requirements for Airport Construction
  - Audit of the National Test Equipment Program
  - Aeronautical Information Services Credentialing Program

Surveillance Activities during COVID

- Virtual Safety Risk Management (SRM)
  - Increased SRM panel observation– enhanced local expertise and knowledge
- Continuous and enhanced monitoring of safety data
  - Specialized Focus Teams, detailed functional models, and enhanced informal oversight programs
- Adherence to Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) procedures
  - Monitoring ATC Zero facilities and changes to COOP procedures
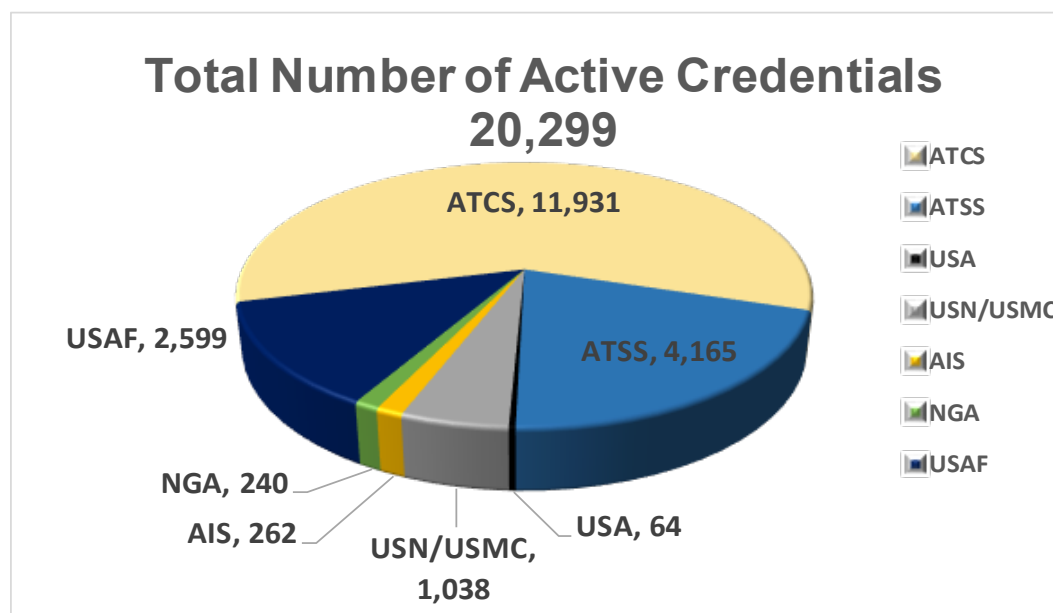
Credentialing Safety Specialists

- Air Traffic Control Specialist (ATCS) Credentials
  - FAA Air Traffic Control Specialist (ATCO)
  - US Air Force Air Traffic Control Specialist
  - US Navy/US Marine Corps Air Traffic Control Specialist
- Other Credentials Issued
  - FAA Airway Transportation System Specialist (Air Traffic Safety Electronic Personnel - ATSEP)
  - Aeronautical Information Specialist (AIS)
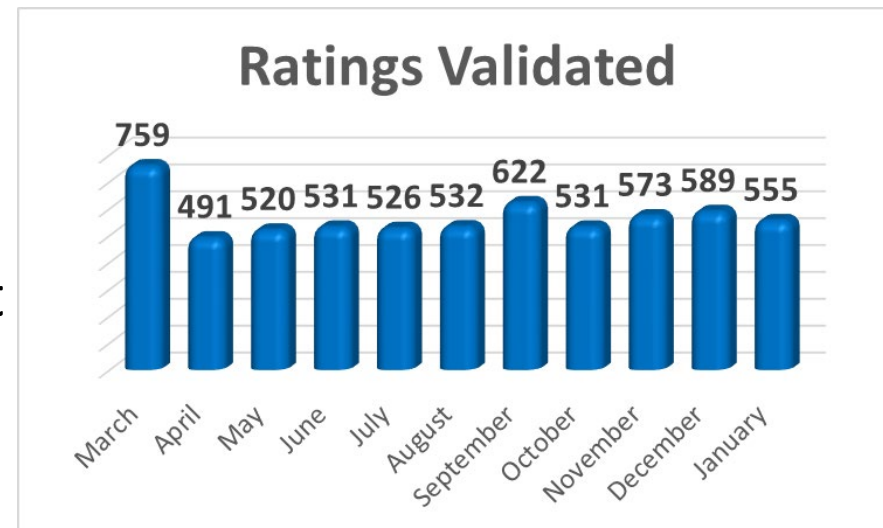
Pre-COVID Statistics (FY19)

- Credentialing
  - In collaboration with the service provider, reviewed 2,000 individual credentials across 37 different facilities and revamp the process to address expired ratings

Total Number of Active Credentials 20,299

Legend:
- ATCS
- ATSS
- USA
- USN/USMC
- AIS
- NGA
- USAF

- ATCS, 11,931
- ATSS, 4,165
- USAF, 2,599
- NGA, 240
- AIS, 262
- USN/USMC, 1,038
- USA, 64

Credentialing during COVID – Biennial Skills Evaluations (BSEs)

- Extended the BSE requirement for ATCS Credential (License) Holders with ratings that expired between March-Sept 2020
  - Ratings valid for four calendar months past expiration

- Created and implemented supplemental tracking of more than 6,200 controller rating expirations
  - Ensured continued oversight outside of normal system capabilities

Ratings Validated

March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January
759	491	520	531	526	532	622	531	573	589	555

Credentialing during COVID – Alternative Methods of Observation

- Alternative Methods for Observing BSEs for ATCS Credential Holders
  - AOV authorized the use of alternative observation methodology for ATCS to conduct BSEs to support mitigations to help ensure the safety and health of ATCS Credential Holders

Credentialing during COVID – Medical Certificates

- Extended the validity of medical certificates that expired from April to September 2020 to 3 calendar months beyond the original expiration date
  - Applied to over 300 air traffic controllers who were not employed by the FAA or who were not on active duty with the Department of Defense

Activities to Enhance Oversight

- Deployed virtual (enhanced) employee onboarding and training

- Increased communication/engagement and collaborative approach – within AOV and with external stakeholders particularly the ANSP

- Tracking and analyzing 1) Activities in response to or specifically because of the COVID-19, 2) Activities unable to be completed, and 3) lessons learned

Key Takeaways

- Foster innovation and agility
  - Develop regulatory responses aligned with health req'ts
- Utilize virtual tools
  - Conduct surveillance activities
  - Proactively collaborate to identify risk
  - Onboard and train personnel
- Proactively invest in collaboration with stakeholders
  - Learn from each other!

Looking forward, continue to apply lessons learned, seek innovative approaches, connect globally, and be ready to adjust to changes in the aviation landscape.