

Accountability, recognition are two words the FAA must soon add to its vocabulary



Paul Rinaldi, Executive Vice President

When we hear the word accountability, we think of other words such as responsibility, liability, answerability; all words that FAA management has neglected to exercise over the last five years.

When we hear the word recognition, we think of words such as gratitude, thanks, appreciation; again, words that aren't in the vocabulary of an FAA that has consistently failed to properly acknowledge controllers over the years.

On the cusp of a new FAA administrator, I recently asked Randy Babbitt point blank if he is prepared to hold FAA management officials at all levels accountable for their decisions, actions and inability to properly do their jobs. I mean, after all, the controllers are held accountable for every syllable that comes out of their mouths and every keystroke they make.

Babbitt, of course, answered with the obligatory, "YES, I will hold management completely accountable at every level!"

If that happens, imagine what that would really look like for our membership!

The COO and all the ATO's vice presidents and the regional administrators, being held accountable for their decisions and lack of action on major problems affecting the National Airspace System.

Your facility manager, operations managers and supervisors being held responsible for the daily operation and someone actually overseeing the disaster of this FAA management structure!

It's almost humorous to think about it. We all know how incompetent and inept they all are at their jobs. Born out of their inexperience, we are starting to see equipment, procedures and airspace changes that will never work.

And yet, as we get closer to an FAA administrator and getting back to the table to negotiate a fair collective bargaining agreement, we have seen management rush to implement as many of its bad ideas as they can, a complete land grab so to speak, while no one is holding them accountable.

One example of this is management's new fatigue order. This is something the agency was mandated by the NTSB to work on with the union and yet it ignored that direction and is now rushing to implement its own order before we get a new administrator.

Moreover, Hank Krakowski is continuing to thumb his nose at both NATCA and Congress and move forward on facility realignments all over the country. Next up in his sights is an ill-conceived and pointless June deconsolidation of Memphis tower and TRACON, with plans recently announced to dismantle Boise, Champaign, Ill., and Abilene, Texas, as well. He has no business plan and no reason to deconsolidate. It costs more, creates a need for more staffing and limits the exposure and knowledge for controllers, resulting in a less safe operation. Nevertheless, he mindlessly moves on a

destructive path because he can. And nobody is holding him accountable for these decisions.

The ATO VP's try to continue business as usual, resulting in running the NAS into the ground and wasting billions of taxpayer dollars with their grossly overstaffed management structure and their inept policies and procedures. Meanwhile, we continue to pick up the pieces behind them, holding the bag while running the safest, most efficient airspace system in the world.

In most facilities across the country they have 4-to-1 supervisor ratios. They should be embarrassed by this number! There is no justifiable work for these supervisors! We want management held accountable for its actions!

The arrogance of these managers never ceases to amaze me. We have controllers across the nation getting recognized for the outstanding work we do, day in and day out: Patrick Harten, with the Hudson River landing of US Airways Flight 1549, Tom Hedeem, with the work to help airport rescue crews find the Continental crash in Denver, all of the Archie League award winners, and the controllers from Miami Center and Fort Myers Tower, who instructed a novice pilot to a safe landing on Easter Sunday, saving four lives. The pilot, Doug White, said he could never have done it without the help of the air traffic controllers.

"Heartfelt thanks," White told the Associated Press. "They don't make near enough money, don't get near enough respect for what they do."

The entire country respects and recognizes the job air traffic controllers do day in and day out. Everyone, that is, except the FAA managers. Our pay has been cut and theirs has not. We are severely understaffed and they are not. We have not seen a pay raise in three years, and managers have received all federal pay increases plus bonuses!

A simple "thank you" might be nice right about now.

Unfortunately, the FAA management team at Fort Worth Center has reached a new low when it comes to recognizing controllers for an outstanding job on position. After getting your head kicked in on a busy sector working airplanes through convective weather in the Southwest, the supervisor will come up to the controller and present them with a drink card. Good for one beverage from the cafeteria! Unbelievable!

You can see the actual card on this page. It reminds me of when my children were in kindergarten. If they went a full week without acting up they would get ice cream on Friday! How insulting that some supervisor would pass these drink cards out to the highly trained, highly skilled professionals who work the most complex, most congested airspace in the world. Here little boy, go get a soda. How insulting!

I can't wait to hold these incompetent, inept, inexperienced, no talent fools, accountable for their actions!

I can't wait for the FAA to recognize and appreciate the work the air traffic controllers do.

