

Flight service stations in jeopardy

by the National Association
of Air Traffic Specialists,
Alaska Region

Flight Service Stations (FSS) and the air traffic controllers who staff them are responsible for a myriad of aviation related safety functions. This is true throughout the nation but, is of utmost importance to aviation users in Alaska. Flight Service Stations provide emergency services, including lost and disoriented aircraft services, weather brief-

ing services (both preflight and en route), traffic advisories, flight plan and special reporting services and in-flight communications to aircraft flying in this most geographically challenging of states. Safety and service are the prime objectives of the Flight Service Station Specialist.

The controllers assigned to FSS's are trained to locate and assist pilots who become lost or disoriented in inclement weather or encounter any number of other inflight emergencies that

might occur. Flight Service controllers provide a wide variety of weather briefing services to general aviation pilots who must make choices on whether to fly themselves or to use the services of air taxi operators or scheduled air carriers. Air Taxi operators use the weather gathering and dissemination services of the Flight Service Station in order to make decisions on the safety or feasibility of proposed flights.

A significant number of outlying

Page 10, please

Flight service stations in jeopardy . . .

Continued from page 2

FSS's in the state have been closed in recent years primarily as a result of the consolidation of services which are remoted (sometimes over great distances) to centralized Automated FSS's such as we have in Fairbanks, Kenai and Juneau.

With this transfer of responsibility of services and remoting of equipment to the automated facilities, some services that the users in the effected communities had come to rely upon, have been lost or degraded. The aviation "users" in Alaska have communicated to the FAA and to their elected representatives that the consolidation of the state's FSS network into three AFSS's was unacceptable.

Yet, the issues of facility closings, reductions in personnel, degradation of

services, non-implementation of the Auxiliary FSS Plan, Alaska Rotation, and the myriad of other issues that have and continue to impact the FSS network and general aviation, pale in comparison to the latest and most ominous threat now looming on the horizon.

While the Clinton administration pushes its' plan to "corporatize the air traffic control system," a national "field reorganization workgroup" is laying the groundwork for the elimination of the Flight Service option as we know it. Calling for a one third reduction in the FSS work force by 1999 and zeroing out all budgetary requirements for personnel and equipment beginning in the year 2000, it has been reported "of the record" (by highly placed FAA sources) that the FAA administrator for the Air Traffic has signed off on a document entitled *FAA*

Vision of the Future, Year 2000 Plan, which calls for the privatization of Flight Service. It is reported further, that the workgroup is designing a plan to contract out all FSS weather briefing services to private companies and consolidate all inflight communication functions and relocate the remaining work force into existing regional Air Route Traffic Control Centers.

We urgently request your support in urging Congress to kill "the corporation," restore full Agency funding for Flight Service and to co-sponsor Rep. Lightfoot's H.R. 1392, *The Federal Aviation Administration Reform Act of 1995*, establishing the creation of an independent FAA, free of the bureaucratic oversight of the Department of Transportation.