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Air-Traffic Controllers With Perfect Shutdown Attendance to Get \$10,000 Bonuses

Transportation Department said 776 controllers and technicians will receive bonuses, suggesting only a fraction didn't miss work

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About 11,000 fully certified air-traffic controllers, excluding trainees, manage traffic in U.S. skies. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

The Transportation Department said it would pay \$10,000 bonuses to air-traffic controllers who didn't miss work during [the federal government shutdown](#).

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Bryan Bedford said Thursday that the bonuses will be given to 776 air-traffic controllers and technicians who maintained perfect attendance during the shutdown.

"These patriotic men and women never missed a beat and kept the flying public safe throughout the shutdown," Duffy said.

Recipients will be notified next week, and all payments will be delivered by Dec. 9, according to the FAA. The announcement suggests only a fraction of the air-traffic control workforce stayed fully on the job during the shutdown. The FAA didn't immediately comment on whether controllers who called in fatigued would be eligible.

Dave Spero, president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, said at least 400 technicians and other workers in the union would receive bonuses. He said the agency didn't

coordinate with the union about who would be eligible.

Trump administration officials this month have pledged bonus payments to federal transportation workers who continued reporting for work throughout the shutdown, during which they missed paychecks.

Some controllers and security agents called out of work or took side jobs during the five-week shutdown, Duffy has said. Authorities cited staffing shortages when they [cut commercial air traffic](#) in the final week of the shutdown.

Last week, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said some Transportation Security Administration agents would be given \$10,000 bonuses if they “provided exemplary service” during the shutdown. The agency hasn’t detailed how many TSA agents would receive a bonus or the criteria to be eligible.

About 11,000 fully certified air-traffic controllers, excluding trainees, manage traffic in U.S. skies. The FAA has struggled for years to fully staff the country’s control towers, jobs that often require [lengthy training, long hours and intense stress](#).

As of May 2024, the median annual wage for air-traffic controllers was \$144,580, [according to the Labor Department](#).

Duffy said Tuesday in an interview with Fox News that some federal aviation employees might be penalized for calling out of work during the shutdown.

“We’re going to look at the ones who, when the shutdown first happened, they just started calling out sick right away, and they didn’t come in to work over the course of that 43 days,” Duffy said. “Those ones we’ll look at.”

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association labor union raised concerns with the bonuses, saying that only 311 union members would receive payments, while thousands of others who consistently reported for duty during the shutdown were excluded.

“More than 311 of these dedicated professionals were instrumental in keeping America moving,” the union said Thursday.

Nick Daniels, the union’s president, said during a Senate hearing on Wednesday that controllers weren’t calling out of work during the shutdown out of protest.

“They were calling in with not being able to put gas in their car,” Daniels said. “They were calling in with not being able to pay for child care.”

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