



PASS Reacts to Closure of McCarran Air Traffic Control Tower

The Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS) issued the following statement today regarding the situation at Las Vegas McCarran International Airport last night:

Upon learning that an air traffic controller tested positive for COVID-19 at McCarran International Airport, PASS is alarmed that Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) technical operations employees the union represents were not immediately informed about the test results so they could take proper precautions. They found out about the exposure after the tower at McCarran was evacuated. PASS is not the employee representative of the air traffic controllers.

The health and safety of FAA employees is a top priority for PASS and the union wishes a speedy recovery for the impacted controller and his or her family.

Just yesterday, PASS cautioned that the COVID-19 outbreak at Midway International Airport was not going to be an isolated incident and urged FAA leadership to set a gold standard with its response to the Midway situation for other airports to follow.

That did not happen at McCarran last night. The technical operations employees on duty at the McCarran tower learned about the evacuation when an equipment alarm prompted an unanswered call to the air traffic control cab. Following protocol, the employee contacted the Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) air traffic control supervisor who told the technician not to go into the tower cab because it had been evacuated due to an employee testing positive for COVID-19. Other technicians had just finished their shifts without knowing about the positive test results.

The FAA told PASS last week that it would be sending all managers a check list indicating which employees may be at risk of exposure. If the managers at McCarran had this list, why weren't the employees informed and protocols followed? The union has yet to be provided with that checklist which is critical information to ensure that all PASS-represented employees are kept informed about their local situation. This clearly did not happen at McCarran.

In a message to FAA employees this morning regarding his own possible exposure to the coronavirus, Administrator Steve Dickson wrote: "I am absolutely committed to the health and well-being of all FAA people and their families." That message must be communicated down to all facility management as it is clear from last night's incident at McCarran that local managers and supervisors are not concerned with the safety of employees on the frontlines.

PASS calls on the administrator and all other senior FAA officials to take swift and decisive action to ensure that frontline managers and supervisors have clear, consistent protocols in place that protect all employees at every FAA operational and support facility.