



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**
Paula J. Hammond, P.E.
Secretary of Transportation

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Mr. Tony Mello
Director of Terminal Operations
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave. , SW.
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Mr. Mello:

As the stewards of Washington state's aviation system, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation Division encourages implementation of measures to prevent closures of our state's airport towers.

Washington's aviation system is an indispensable part of the state's transportation system. It stimulates our economy, promotes commerce, moves people, and enables the protection of our border and the safeguarding of critical functions and infrastructure that are vital to the well-being of our state and nation.

Washington state is home to the third largest fleet concentration of naval forces, the largest military base on the West Coast (Joint Base Lewis McChord), and a strategic Air Force base (Fairchild AFB). Numerous important national assets are located in Washington including the nation's largest network of hydroelectric dams, nuclear energy facilities, major sea ports, international airports, vital manufacturing facilities, critical information technology system architecture, and key highway/bridge infrastructure.

Washington state is vulnerable to the natural hazards of avalanche, drought, earthquake, flood, tsunami, volcano, and wild land fire. The state is also susceptible to many technological (human-caused) hazards associated with abandoned underground mines, chemicals, civil disturbances, dam failures, hazardous materials, pipelines, radiological releases, terrorism, transportation incidents, and urban fires.

The operation and protection of Washington's critical national assets is dependent on the state's aviation system. An efficient aviation system enables stewards of these national resources to prepare for the consequences of hazards, and respond and recover in the event of an emergency or disaster. The current configuration of contract towers is a crucial component of the state's aviation system that contributes to the operation and protection of these vital national assets, and in the event of an emergency or disaster, is essential to the state's emergency response and recovery operations.

I urge you to make every possible effort to prevent the closure of control towers in Washington state and preserve the ability of our aviation system to support these essential functions that protect our citizens.

Sincerely,

Tristan Atkins,
Director of Aviation
Washington State Department of Transportation - Aviation