

"The policy at AFS-411 Logan International Airport is that if the allotted time for a site is used up during the month and some of the equipment at that site has not been routined for that month, it will not be routined. The only justification for looking at this equipment is that it is failing or has failed. At Logan ATCT, there is one transmitter for the primary frequency of departure control. This transmitter doesn't receive the proper routines according to agency handbooks because (1) there is not a back-up transmitter for this frequency, and (2) there has not been a midnight shift for communications since May 1965, even though traffic between midnight and 0800 has doubled and tripled. The NAVAID section at AFS-411 is constantly being monitored regarding time spent at sites. Several times, marker sites of the Instrument Landing System have had scheduled preventative maintenance, but all the time allotted for this site for the month was used up. This task was put off until the next month.

"The safety of the flying public has been jeopardized by putting time limits on maintenance at the Airways Facility sectors. You cannot put time limits on preventative or corrective maintenance and have a facility operating at peak efficiency."

A shortage of maintenance workers is the principal ingredient in another problem area, this one at the New York Air Route Traffic Control Center.

As reported by employees at that facility, "Presently, at the New York ARTCC, there are only two qualified engine generator men. If there is a trouble at night, a WB-9 building maintenance man, who is not qualified to certify the powerplant and related switchgear, must perform the task of transferring the center from commercial power to emergency power. If he encounters any problems beyond his technical competence, the New York Center could very possibly be without any power, or in effect, be of no use to any aircraft which normally rely on this critical station.

"Recently, the New York ARTCC was utilizing the emergency powerplant when both engine generators developed trouble, forcing the engine generator man to revert back to commercial power. Fortunately, commercial power was available, and also an engine generator man happened to be available."

Another typical example of degradation of maintenance programs because of lack of employees occurred at Colorado Springs, Colo. The supervisory electronics technician of the radar/communications unit there advised air traffic control tower and Weather Bureau personnel, by memo dated July 19, 1967, that repairs of equipment outages would simply have to wait. Text of the memo follows:

"Beginning on or about July 24, the Radar/Comm crew will become involved with installation of the ASR-5. We will transfer Joe Vegh to the installation crew for the duration of the project. This transfer, during the annual leave season, leaves the crew two men short.

"Operating this short, we may not always have a man available to take care of your problems, so be patient, and we will take care of the equipment failures as soon as we can."

Note the employees, "This is one of the reasons for poor air traffic control service. The ASR-1 radar that we are using here was out-dated years ago, and as the above letter states, there is nobody to maintain it. If there is a near mid-air or a collision tomorrow, it is nobody's fault but the FAA."

Evidence is at hand which indicates that things will get much worse before they get better. In the minutes of the Kansas City Area Chiefs Conference, February 13-17, 1967, Warren C. Sharp, Airways Facilities Division Chief of the FAA's Central Region, is quoted as saying, "Improved maintenance techniques are still being evaluated in an effort to determine optimum levels of maintenance. Less than 24-hour watchstanding on ARSR facilities has been proposed as a means of improving productivity."

This statement has a commendable ring to it, but the employees who would be affected by such a program offer the following observations on the possible consequences of such a cut back:

"If for some reason the high voltage goes off at the ARSR (Air Route Surveillance Radar) site and the circuit breaker drops out, who is going to reset it? If the equipment is changed to the standby units by remote control, who is going to see that it is operating at peak performance? We believe that we should not sacrifice safety for the sake of saving money or, as quoted above, improving productivity. Surely, we want to improve in productivity or in any other area where it is needed, but we should not take the safety of peoples' lives too lightly."

The minutes of the same area chiefs conference further note that "the three percent annual productivity increases are expected to continue."