

APPENDIX G

1255 TRANSPONDER CODE HISTORY

The following three letters contain correspondence regarding the acquisition of the National Firefighting Transponder Code 1255.

LETTER #1

To: Bob Martin, USFS Safety
cc: Dave Broadnax, OAS Safety
cc: Larry Mahaffey, BLM Safety

7/17/97

After years of negotiation, the 1255 Transponder Code for fire fighting aircraft is finally a reality. I am very pleased to finally have (in writing) two letters from the FAA that discusses the code and it's useage. The first letter is from the FAA to myself explaining the code useage. The second letter is an "in-house" letter within the FAA to each Air Traffic Division and ARTCC's.

It is important to know that this is a National designation for fire fighting aircraft and it is NOT Agency Specific. This code can be used by all fire fighting agencies, both Federal and State. (There was some initial confusion over the "in-house" letter specifying USFS but Ann Moore assures me that the code is not agency specific.)

If there are any questions regarding the code, please feel free to call me at 503-808-6728. This information needs a wide dissemination to reach all of our fire suppression pilots. Please feel free to edit or distribute this information as you see fit (ie Safety Bulletin, etc).

I hope you share my pleasure that this is at last a reality.....

/s/ Julie J. Stewart
Regional Airspace Coordinator,
Portland, Oregon

LETTER #2

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
July 17th, 1997

Ms. Julie Stewart
USFS/BLM Airspace Manager
PO Box 3623
Portland, OR 97208

Dear Ms. Stewart,

Beginning July 17, 1997 on a national basis, aircraft engaged in, or traveling to, fire fighting operations are approved to use a special beacon code, 1255. The code 1255 may be used by aircraft that are not in contact with air traffic control. Air traffic controllers have been briefed that the code would be equivalent to using the flashing lights and sirens on a fire engine. In other words, aircraft flying from Georgia to Colorado to help fight a fire would not squawk 1255. The 1255 code will increase controller awareness of the fire fighting mission, but will not assure any priority air traffic control services. If needed, special services should be requested from air traffic control. At that time subject to the controller's discretion, the 1255 code may be retained or another beacon code may assigned.

We appreciate your work on this issue and look forward to working with you in the future. We apologize for the delay in implementing this code on a national basis. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Ann Moore in International Traffic Affairs.

Sincerely,

/s/ Charles R. Reavis
Acting Manager, Strategic Air Traffic
Operations and Procedures Division

LETTER #3

THE FOLLOWING IS FROM THE FAA WASHINGTON OFFICE TO ALL FAA AIR TRAFFIC DIVISION MANAGERS IN THE UNITED STATES. IT DISCUSSES THE USE OF SQUAWK CODE 1255 FOR FIRE FIGHTING AIRCRAFT.

Date of Letter: June 12, 1997

Subject: Implementation of Code 1255 for Fire Fighting Aircraft

From: Acting Manager, Strategic Operations and Procedures Division, ATO-100

To: All Regional Air Traffic Division Managers (FAA)

As discussed last autumn, the following information is provided regarding the use of beacon code 1255. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has been approved to use a special beacon code for aircraft engaged in, or traveling to/from fire fighting activities. The concept was agreed to by FAA and USFS representatives. The USFS Airspace Coordinator has informed us that an aircraft's use of the code would be equivalent to using the flashing lights and sirens on a fire engine. In other words, aircraft flying back and forth carrying water to the fire fight would squawk code 1255 while aircraft flying from Georgia to Colorado to help fight a fire would not squawk code 1255. Last year, the fire fighters were given verbal permission to begin using the code 1255 which they have been using in some areas. Other fire fighters are reluctant to use the code without written authorization from the FAA which we will give them pending publication of the revised National Beacon Code Allocation Plan, FAA Order 7110.66B.

The new implementation date for national allocation of the code 1255 will be July 17. Depending on local requirements, on a regional or local basis, facilities may wish to add the code 1255 to the code select lists.

/s/ Charles R. Reavis, Acting Manager
Air Traffic Strategic Operations and Procedures Division
cc: ATO-200/ATO-300