

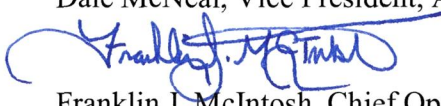


**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Memorandum

Date: September 30, 2026

To: Dale McNeal, Vice President, Air Traffic Organization, AJT-0

From:  Franklin J. McIntosh, Chief Operating Officer, Air Traffic Organization, AJO-0

Subject: DIRECTION: Cease Simultaneous Parallel Departure Operations at APA

Through our Air Traffic Organization (ATO) safety assurance functions, a potential safety concern with simultaneous parallel departure operations was documented, and a quantitative safety risk assessment identified Centennial Airport (APA) as having a higher frequency of recurring parallel departure deviations and aircraft drift between departing aircraft compared to the other facilities using the same operation. APA's unmitigated convergence due to aircraft drift during parallel departure operations resulted in an initial High-risk determination (Refer to Attachment A: Memo: Existing Initial High-Risk: Centennial Airport Parallel Departure for details).

This memorandum documents my direction to cease simultaneous parallel departure operations at APA until approved mitigations are identified to reduce the safety risk of the operation to an acceptable level.

Cc:

Randa Hayes, Deputy Chief Operating Officer (A), AJO-0

Christopher Wilbanks, Vice President, Mission Support Services, AJV-0

Hope Kubala, Vice President, Operational System Intelligence, AJS-0



Memorandum

Date: September 29, 2026

To: Franklin J. McIntosh, Chief Operating Officer, Air Traffic Organization, AJO-0
HOPE A KUBALA Digitally signed by HOPE A
KUBALA
Date: 2026.09.29 07:10:23 -05'00'

From: Hope Kubala, Vice President, Operational System Intelligence, AJS-0

Prepared by: Maggie Geraghty, Acting Director, System Resilience Directorate, AJS-2

Subject: Existing Initial High-Risk: Centennial Airport Parallel Departures

In accordance with the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Safety Management System Manual (July 2026), this memorandum informs the ATO Chief Operating Officer of an existing, initial High-risk hazard in the National Airspace System (NAS).

Through our ATO safety assurance functions, Operational System Intelligence (AJS) identified a potential safety concern with simultaneous parallel departure operations and conducted a quantitative safety risk assessment, including nine facilities that use this operation: Centennial (APA), Charlotte (CLT), Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW), Fort Worth (FTW), George Bush-Houston (IAH), Chicago O'Hare (ORD), DeKalb-Peachtree (PDK), Seattle-Tacoma (SEA), and San Francisco (SFO).

During the safety risk assessment, APA was identified as having a higher frequency of recurring parallel departure deviations and aircraft drift between departing aircraft compared to the other facilities evaluated. As a result, a separate safety risk assessment was conducted for APA.

Unmitigated convergence due to aircraft drift during parallel departure operations resulted in an initial High-risk determination. (Refer to Attachment 1 for data summary.)

A Safety Risk Management (SRM) panel will be conducted to address the risk associated with APA's operations through long-term mitigations and a monitoring plan.

The safety risk associated with simultaneous parallel departure operations at the remaining eight facilities was assessed as Medium.

For questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Maggie Geraghty at Maggie.E.Geraghty@faa.gov.

Cc:

Randa Hayes, Deputy Chief Operating Officer (A), AJO-0

Christopher Wilbanks, Vice President, Mission Support Services, AJV-0

Dale McNeal, Vice President, Air Traffic Services, AJT-0

David Leslie, Deputy Vice President, Air Traffic Services, AJT-0

James C. Schultz III, Director, Strategic Operations, AJT-1

Roland Ratliff, Deputy Vice President, Operational System Intelligence, AJS-0



Federal Aviation Administration

Air Traffic Organization, Operational System Intelligence
September 29, 2026

APA Parallel Departures Preliminary Safety Risk Assessment (PSRA)

Executive Summary

Through safety data collection and routine Quality Assurance reviews, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Operational System Intelligence Directorate identified a recurring safety vulnerability in the Centennial Airport (APA) terminal area: Parallel Departure Deviations and Aircraft Drift occurring between departing aircraft. These events present significant collision risks due to aircraft proximity, increased controller and pilot workload, and compressed reaction times that reduce the opportunity to identify and mitigate potential aircraft convergence.

An initial review of the 115 event notifications yielded 60 verified events involving aircraft drifting off course due to wind during simultaneous parallel departures. To establish a repeatable risk assessment, these events were evaluated in accordance with the 2026 ATO Safety Management System (SMS) Manual, utilizing Table 3.3, Severity Table for Effects, and applying the first four phases of the DIAAT process: Describe the System, Identify Hazards, Analyze Risk, and Assess Risk.

Quantitative risk analysis was integrated with total departures for the impacted runways at APA to calculate event likelihood per operation and assign baseline risk levels, resulting in an overall assessment of a HIGH initial risk.

Phase 1: Describe the System

Parallel departure operations at APA require precise lateral and vertical track adherence to ensure safe separation between departing aircraft. When standard track adherence is compromised, due to environmental factors, pilot deviations, or incorrect turns, separation margins are reduced, limiting the time available to identify and mitigate potential conflicts.

- **Scope:** Air traffic operations involving parallel departures at the Centennial Air Traffic Control Tower (APA) between May 01, 2025, and April 30, 2026.
- **Dataset:** Mandatory Occurrence Reports and Preliminary Aviation Risk Identification and Assessment Reports involving parallel departure drift were reviewed and verified.
- **Operations Volume:** Total departures for the impacted runways at APA during the timeframe were 35,551.

Phase 2: Identify Hazards

The primary hazard is unmitigated convergence resulting from aircraft deviation or drift during simultaneous parallel departure operations. An in-depth review of the data confirms that both MAJOR and HAZARDOUS severity outcomes in this airspace are driven by parallel departing aircraft drifting into adjacent departure paths.

Potential contributing factors associated with this hazard include:

- Aircraft drift due to wind conditions or other environmental factors.
- Incorrect pilot turns or pilot deviations off the assigned departure paths.
- Delayed controller recognition of incorrect turns or omission of timely Traffic Advisories and Safety Alerts.

Phase 3: Analyze Risk

Severity was assessed using the following indicators to evaluate the reduction in safety margins during each encounter:

- Proximity: Lateral < 600' AND Vertical < 200'
- ATC Mitigation: Did ATC notice the incorrect turn?
- Traffic Advisory: Was a Traffic Advisory / Safety Alert Issued?
- Evasive Maneuvers: Did the encounter result in evasive maneuvers?
- TCAS Alert: Did the encounter result in a TCAS alert?

Points were assigned based on these failing barriers or extreme indicators (1 point for each threshold met). If an event accumulated 3 points, it was scored Major; 2 points, Minor; and 1 point, Minimal. Events with verified NMACs were automatically scored as Hazardous.

Hazard	Total Departures	Highest Credible Severity	Likelihood	Risk
Parallel Departure Deviation / Drift resulting in unmitigated convergence	35,551	Hazardous (2 Events)	5.63E-05	HIGH (2B)
		Major (9 Events)	2.53E-04	HIGH (3B)
		Minor (26)	7.31E-04	MEDIUM (4B)
		Minimal (23)	6.47E-04	LOW (5B)

Phase 4: Assess Risk

The results of the severity analysis were mapped against the affected operations to produce the existing risk level. Based on the severity and likelihood definitions in the 2026 ATO SMS Manual, the baseline initial risk for closely spaced parallel departures at APA is evaluated as High. This assessment is driven by the occurrence of critically close proximity events and verified NMACs (Hazardous severity) occurring at a concerning frequency due to the heavily integrated traffic on adjacent runway centerlines.

Attachment 1: Safety Data

Safety data from Mandatory Occurrence Reports and Preliminary Aviation Risk Identification and Assessment Reports (May 1, 2025, through April 30, 2026) were reviewed against a set of risk analysis criteria in accordance with the ATO SMS Manual. The analysis assessed events based on aircraft proximity (lateral separation less than 600 feet and vertical separation less than 200 feet), air traffic control recognition of an incorrect turn, issuance of traffic advisories or safety alerts, evasive maneuvers, and Traffic Collision Avoidance System alerts. Points were assigned based on failing safety barriers or extreme indicators, with one point assigned for each threshold met. Events meeting three indicators were classified as Major (3), two indicators as Minor (4), and one indicator as Minimal (5). Events involving verified Near Midair Collisions were automatically classified as Hazardous (2). The results of the severity analysis, combined with the affected operations, produced the existing risk levels depicted in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Centennial Airport (APA) Parallel Departure Deviation / Drift Resulting in Unmitigated Convergence

Hazard	Total Departures	Highest Credible Severity	Likelihood	Risk
Parallel Departure Deviation / Drift resulting in unmitigated convergence	35,551	Hazardous (2 Events)	5.63E-05	HIGH (2B)
		Major (9 Events)	2.53E-04	HIGH (3B)
		Minor (26)	7.31E-04	MEDIUM (4B)
		Minimal (23)	6.47E-04	LOW (5B)

Table 2. Parallel Departure Deviation / Drift Resulting in Unmitigated Convergence

Event Type	Total Departures	Highest Credible Severity	Likelihood	Risk
Two Aircraft	623,758	Major (2 Events)	1.60E-06	MEDIUM (3C)
Single Aircraft	1,443,762	Major (3 Events)	2.078E-06	MEDIUM (3C)