

FAA Streamlines NOTAM Process

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The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), through coordination with the FCC and other federal stakeholders, expects by mid-January 2015 to streamline the online process for submitting Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs). NOTAMs identify towers that are experiencing a lighting outage or otherwise faulty lighting and provide a mechanism for the FAA to alert aviation operations to the outage. The FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau [issued an advisory](#) on December 8th announcing the FAA's new process which will permit tower owners to individually select the active period for each NOTAM in lieu of the current default of fifteen (15) days.

Under Part 17 of the FCC's rules, tower owners are required to notify the FAA, either via telephone or through a web-based form maintained by the FAA's US NOTAM office, *within 30 minutes of discovering a lighting outage* and subsequently take remedial steps to repair the outage as quickly as possible. The NOTAM process is critical to air safety, and the FCC has engaged in recent enforcement action where the process has not been followed, as reported in our recent [blogs](#). Currently, all NOTAMs expire automatically after 15 days. The agencies recognized that some lighting outages cannot be addressed within the 15 day period and having a default period may create unnecessary burdens and inefficiencies on tower owners forced to make repeated filings and the agencies that process them.

To streamline the process, the FAA plans to revise its web-based form by mid-January to allow tower owners to self-select an expected repair date. The advisory warns the industry that the FCC "will respond aggressively" if it determines that tower owners are abusing the flexibility of the new process.

The updates to the NOTAM requirements are part of a larger initiative at the FCC to eliminate outdated rules and to address the rules that relate to wireless infrastructure, including recent amendments to the [marking and lighting rules](#) and the [tower siting rules](#). Tower owners should continue to pay close attention to FCC and FAA actions in this area and take advantage of rule changes designed to facilitate deployment, maintenance, and compliance with infrastructure obligations. More liberal rules may be coupled with greater enforcement.