

FAA Contingency Response: Status & Lessons Learned

Presented to: ICAO NAM/CAR/CONT2

By: FAA

Date: April 20-22, 2022



Federal Aviation
Administration



Discussion Items

- **COVID-19 Impacts**

- Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) closures for the last two years

- **Lessons Learned**

- Development of routes that did not have ATC communication or surveillance capabilities
- Gaps in operational readiness and contingency planning policy

- **Current Work**

- ATC operational readiness and contingency planning policy updates
- Near-term ARTCC contingency capability overview

- **Next Steps**

- Review of all Operational Contingency Plans (OCPs) and LOAs that contain OCP procedures



COVID-19–Related ATC-Zero Events

- **Between February 2020 and February 2022:**
 - COVID-19–Related ATC-Zero events at ARTCCs – **226**
 - Average duration of events: **2 hours**

Times adjacent ARTCCs were ATC-Zero concurrently: **8**



Lessons Learned

- **COVID-19–related closures revealed a gap in ATC operational readiness and contingency planning policy and procedures.**
 - Operational contingency plans targeted long-term outages only.



Lessons Learned, Cont.

- **Development of routes that did not have ATC communication or surveillance capabilities**

ATC would issue a non radar clearance at point A. The pilot would then navigate through the ATC Zero airspace without direct access to ATC until point B, which was on the other side of the impacted airspace.



Lessons Learned, Cont.

- **Airlines, pilot associations, and ATC raised concerns regarding the use of these routes.**
 - A safety workgroup was assembled and identified concerns and potential safety risks:
 - Lack of ATC and pilot training
 - Inability to share contingency routes in advance
 - Emergency planning / aircraft deviation
 - OpSpec compliance
- **The ATO has decided to stop use of contingency routes without both, surveillance *and* communication capabilities.**



Current Progress

- **Operational Readiness and Contingency Planning Policy Updates**
 - Significant policy updates include:
 - More detailed OCP requirements (to include immediately after an outage)
 - Annual OCP exercise conduct and documentation requirements
 - Requirement that OCPs and LOAs have approval signatures from all Support Facility ATMs

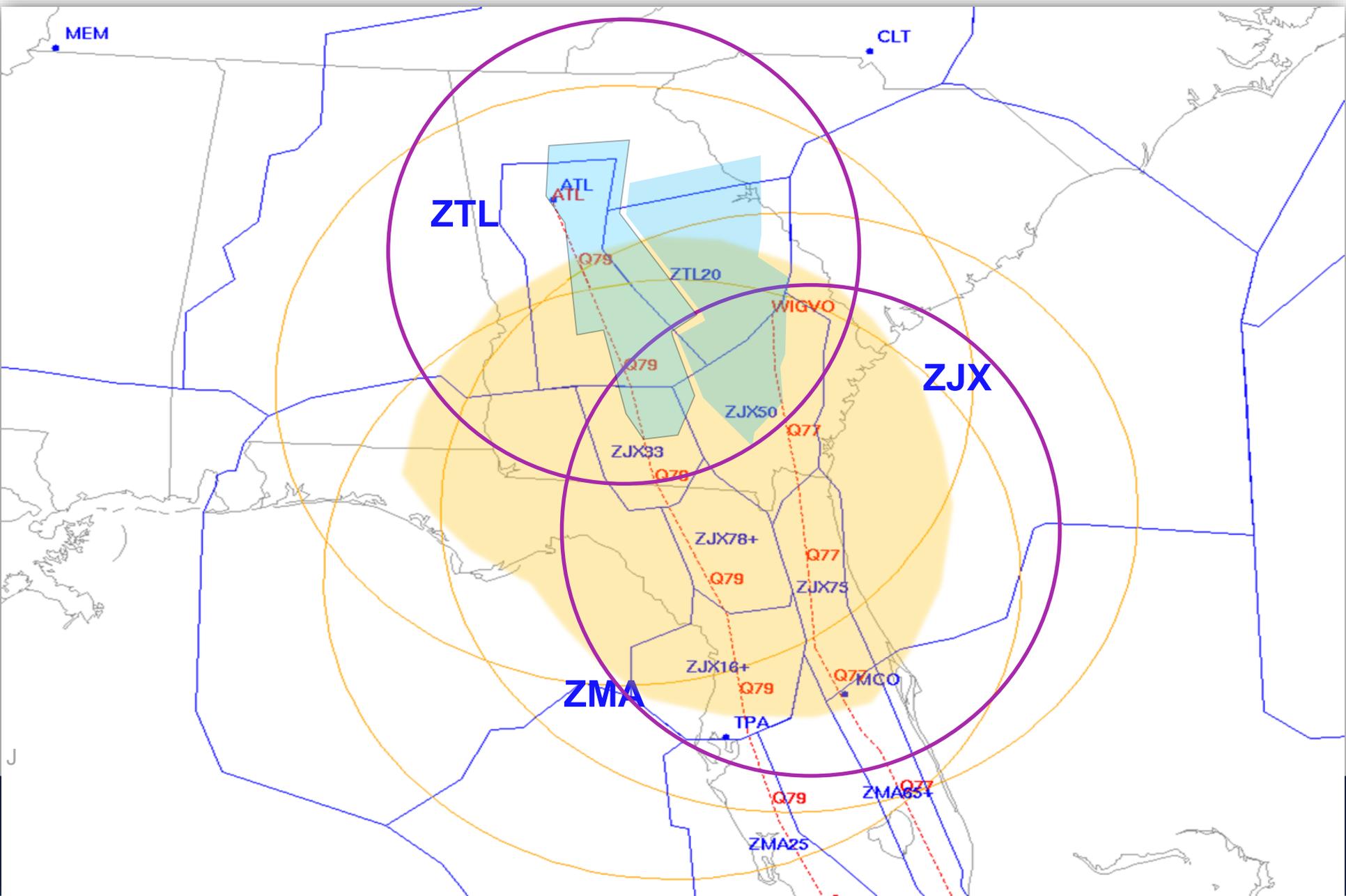


Current Progress, Cont.

- **Near-term ARTCC Contingency Capability**
 - Identified existing overlapping surveillance and air/ground communication capabilities
 - Used for short-duration outages (less than 48–96 hours)
 - Proof of concept: ZJX ATC-Zero Event
 - ZTL and ZMA support
 - Two routes
 - Developed ATC procedures, ATC and Technician training requirements, and briefing packages.
 - Conducted safety risk management panel with ATC, Tech Ops, airlines, and pilot associations.



Overlapping Radar & Communications



Next Steps

- **FAA will review all OCPs and LOAs with contingency procedures.**
 - Update to ensure support facility procedures are clear and don't include non-surveillance routes that also lack communication capabilities.
 - Ensure all support facility ATMs have agreed to and approved (with signature) support procedures therein.
- **FAA will begin reaching out to our neighbors and all support facilities looking at contingency agreements at the regional level.**



Questions?

