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General Operating and Administrative Policy

RECORD OF CHANGES

August 2020

- Inception of ZDC General Operating Policy

December 2020 (rev. A)

- 4-3-1 Lack of Activity, 9-1 Visiting Controllers, Appendix C Training and Visiting Flow

April 2021 (rev. B)

- Added language further clarifying 10-2-1, Added 10-2-2 appeals process for event sign up suspension

15 October 2022 (rev. C)

- GOP reorganized with significant revision. New policy removes all training program policy and guidance from this document.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. General

Section 1. Introduction

1–1–1. PURPOSE OF THIS ORDER

This order provides policy direction for all controllers of the Virtual Washington ARTCC (vZDC) and for all visiting controllers controlling facilities under the area of responsibility of vZDC. This order is for use with vZDC, VATUSA, and the VATSIM network and is not associated with or applicable to any facility outside the VATSIM network.

1–1–2. AUDIENCE

This order applies to all vZDC controllers and any non-assigned (i.e., visiting) controller providing air traffic control services at any facility or airspace delegated to vZDC.

1–1–3. DISCLAIMER

This document is for use in a simulated environment. This document will not be referenced or utilized in live operations in the National Airspace System (NAS). Virtual Washington ARTCC, VATUSA, and VATSIM are not responsible for use of this order outside the simulation environment. vZDC, VATUSA, and VATSIM are not affiliated with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in any form and the content herein is for simulated purposes only.

1–1–4. WHERE TO FIND THIS ORDER

This order is available on the vZDC web site at https://www.vzdc.org/controllers/files under the SOPs tab.

Section 2. Organization

1–2–1. VIRTUAL AIR TRAFFIC SIMULATION NETWORK (VATSIM)

a. The Virtual Air Traffic Simulation Network (VATSIM) is an online community created for enthusiasts of flight simulation and air traffic control. The VATSIM Board of Governors (BoG), and Executive Directors have governing power of the network and the organization. The VATSIM founders have ownership rights and operational privileges over VATSIM.

b. All vZDC initiated policies will be compliant with the VATSIM Code of Conduct (CoC), the VATSIM Code of Regulations (CoR), and the VATSIM Global Ratings Policy (GRP). In the case where a VATSIM, VATNA, or VATUSA directive contradicts this policy, the higher organizational policy takes precedence.

1–2–2. VATSIM UNITED STATES (VATUSA)

VATSIM United States (VATUSA) is a division of the VATSIM North America (VATNA) region of VATSIM. VATUSA policies govern the day-to-day operation of the United States domestic airspace and associated air traffic facilities.

1–2–3. VIRTUAL WASHINGTON ARTCC (VZDC)

Virtual Washington Air Route Traffic Control Center (vZDC ARTCC or vZDC) is a sub-division of VATUSA. vZDC encompasses all airspace and aircraft delegated to the operational Washington ARTCC operated by the Federal Aviation Administration in the United States of America. vZDC policies, to include this document, must meet the minimum standards established by parent organizational levels of VATSIM but may exceed those minimum requirements with appropriate approval.

Section 3. Facilities

1–3–1. DEFINITION

A facility in vZDC is any air traffic control facility that provides air traffic control service on the VATSIM network where an equivalent operational (real word) facility is commissioned to provide air traffic control service.

1–3–2. SCOPE

Policy of vZDC is applicable to all facilities under the area of jurisdiction of vZDC as delegated by VATUSA.

1–3–3. MAJOR FACILITIES

The following facilities are designated "Major Airports" and "Major Airspace." These facilities require facility certification in addition to the appropriate VATSIM rating.

REFERENCE –
VATSIM GRP, Sec 6, Designated Airspace.
vZDC 3120.4, Para 3-5-2, Listing of Certifications.

TBL 1-3-3
Major Airports and Airspace

Facility	Identifier	Location
Potomac Consolidated TRACON	PCT	Warrenton, VA
Baltimore/Washington ATCT	BWI	Baltimore, MD
Washington National ATCT	DCA	Arlington, VA
Washington Dulles ATCT	IAD	Dulles, VA

1–3–4. MINOR FACILITIES

The following facilities are under the area of responsibility of Washington ARTCC. Those facilities not designated as "major" are designated "minor."

REFERENCE –
VATSIM GRP, Sec 6, Designated Airspace.
vZDC 3120.4, Para 3-5-2, Listing of Certifications.

TBL 1-3-4
Minor Airports and Airspace

Facility	Identifier	Location
Andrews ATCT	ADW	Camp Springs, MD
Atlantic City ATCT/TRACON	ACY	Atlantic City, NJ
Bogue ATCT	NJM	Swansboro, NC
Chambers ATCT	NGU	Norfolk, VA
Charlottesville ATCT	CHO	Charlottesville, VA
Cherry Point ATCT	NKT	Cherry Point, NC
Davidson ATCT	DAA	Fort Belvoir, VA
Dover ATCT/RAPCON	DOV	Dover, DE

Easton ATCT	ESN	Easton, MD
Elizabeth City ATCT	ECG	Elizabeth City, NC
Fayetteville ATCT/TRACON	FAY	Fayetteville, NC
Felker ATCT	FAF	Fort Eustis, VA
Frederick ATCT	FDK	Frederick, MD
Hagerstown ATCT	HGR	Hagerstown, MD
Kinston ATCT	ISO	Kinston, NC
Langley ATCT	LFI	Hampton, VA
Lewisburg ATCT	LWB	Lewisburg, WV
Lynchburg ATCT	LYH	Lynchburg, VA
Manassas ATCT	HEF	Manassas, VA
Martin State ATCT	MTN	Baltimore, MD
New Bern ATCT	EWN	New Bern, NC
New River ATCT	NCA	Jacksonville, NC
Newport News ATCT	PHF	Newport News, VA
Norfolk ATCT/TRACON	ORF	Norfolk, VA
Oceana ATCT	NTU	Virginia Beach, VA
Patuxent ATCT/TRACON	NHK	Patuxent River, MD
Phillips ATCT	APG	Aberdeen, MD
Quantico ATCT	NYG	Quantico, VA
Raleigh-Durham ATCT/TRACON	RDU	Morrisville, NC
Richmond ATCT	RIC	Richmond, VA
Roanoke ATCT/TRACON	ROA	Roanoke, VA
Salisbury ATCT	SBY	Salisbury, MD
Seymore Johnson ATCT/RAPCON	GSB	Goldsboro, NC
Wallops ATCT	WAL	Wallops Island, VA
Wilmington ATCT/TRACON	ILM	Wilmington, NC

Section 4. Administrative Positions

1–4–1. AIR TRAFFIC MANAGER

The Air Traffic Manager (ATM) is the overall manager of all vZDC operations and administrative sections. The ATM's duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

   a. Reports to the Northeastern Region Director (VATUSA9).

   b. Responsible for all operations associated with the Virtual Washington ARTCC.

   c. Maintains an online presence on VATSIM server.

   d. Attends periodic meetings to report on ARTCC activities.

   e. Establishes an ARTCC website and oversees its maintenance and currency.

   f. Initiates approval routing for Standard Operating Procedures to the Air Traffic Director.

   g. Provides coordination of position assignments and position restrictions when necessary.

   h. Serves as vZDC conflict resolution point of contact.

   i. Appoints a Deputy Air Traffic Manager (DATM) and defines any duties in addition to those included in this policy.

   j. Recommends disciplinary action to the region Air Traffic Director.

   k. Appoints, or approve, assistant positions for any vZDC administrative position as required.

1–4–2. DEPUTY AIR TRAFFIC MANAGER

The Deputy Air Traffic Manager (DATM) shares the duties and responsibilities of the ATM as assigned. Additional duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

   a. Monitors the day-to-day operations of vZDC.

   b. Assists in the development and execution of vZDC projects.

   c. Maintains an online presence on the VATSIM server.

   d. Functions as vZDC senior staff member.

   e. Attend periodic meetings to report on vZDC activities.

   f. Assist in coordination of position assignments and position restrictions as necessary.

   g. Assume the duties of the ATM when they are unavailable.

   h. Other duties as assigned by the ATM.

1–4–3. TRAINING ADMINISTRATOR

The Training Administrator (TA) is responsible for the training program and training staff for the facility and reports to the ATM. Duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Responsible for monitoring the training staff to ensure overall quality of training.

b. Manage and develop the facility training program.

c. Implement training related materials and manage department projects.

d. Work with other staff offices to coordinate, improve, and develop SOP and LOA for the facility and incorporate that content into the training curriculum.

e. Recommend instructor candidates for appointment to ATM and VATUSA.

f. Provide development opportunities to training staff to further their knowledge and proficiency as trainers.

g. Verify training staff is teaching in accordance with all directive publications.

h. Track the progress of trainees, including testing, promotions, recurrent, and remedial training.

i. Appoint an Assistant Training Administrator (ATA) to assist in management of the training program. ATA appointments are approved by the ATM.

1–4–4. EVENTS COORDINATOR

The Events Coordinator (EC) is responsible for the planning, scheduling, and execution of events at the ARTCC. Duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Reports to the DATM.

b. Identifies and develops events to generate traffic and promote the ARTCC.

c. Implements and oversees approved events.

d. Coordinates with neighboring ARTCC to arrange support for ZDC hosted events and neighboring events.

e. Develops and distributes marketing materials to promote events and the ARTCC

f. Appoints Assistant Events Coordinator (AEC), if desired, to assist in EC duties. Must be approved by the ATM.

1–4–5. FACILITIES ENGINEER

The Facility Engineer (FE) is responsible for the development and maintenance of the following technical resources:

a. Reports to the DATM.

b. Maintains and updates VRC sector files, vSTARS files, vERAM files, and vATIS files.

c. Maintains and updates, in cooperation with the TA, SOPs and LOAs.

d. Manages ZDC facility resources.

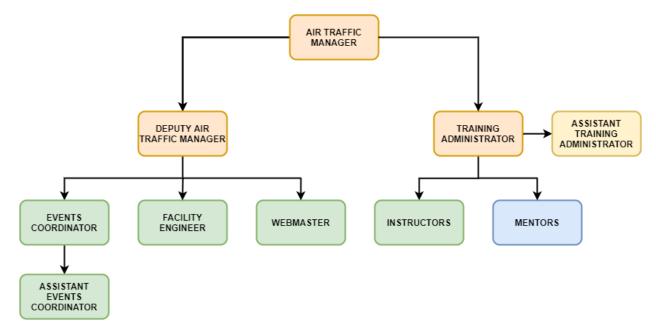### 1–4–6. WEBMASTER (WM)

The Webmaster is responsible for the development and maintenance of the ARTCC website and associated files.

a. Reports to the DATM.

b. Maintains, updates, and manages ARTCC website.

c. Technical advisor to the ATM.

d. Ensures database and website source code is backed-up as required.

e. Any other duties assigned by the DATM.

1–4–7. ORGANIZATION CHART

Chapter 2. Operational Policy

Section 1. Resources

2–1–1. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are technical documents that prescribe operational policy and standards for the respective facility. Compliance with SOP is required by all controllers operating any position at vZDC.

2–1–2. LETTERS OF AGREEMENT (LOA)

Letters of Agreement (LOA) define agreed upon procedures between vZDC and other facilities that a common boundary or overlapping airspace exists. LOA compliance is required by all controllers operating any position at vZDC.

2–1–3. FILES

All files needed for controlling are maintained on the vZDC website files section. The files section includes all publications (SOP, LOA, etc.) and all files needed for the various controller clients in use. Controllers should routinely check the files section to verify the currency date for any airspace related files being used for the most current data.

    a. *Virtual Radar Client (VRC)* utilizes sector files (`.sc2` extension) to provide all data in the controller client. The sector file is updated regularly, and controllers must ensure the current sector file is being used. Controllers should refrain from modifying sector files and instead submit any change requests or corrections to the Facility Engineer.

        1. A *Position File* (`.pof` extension) must be used to ensure the correct squawk codes are assigned. The position file also ensures other controllers position identifier is displayed correctly.

        2. An *Alias File* is used to provide a list of alias commands for use with text pilots and to facilitate the sending of pre-departure clearance (PDC) to eligible and participating aircraft. Controllers are permitted to modify the alias file if desired.

    b. *vSTARS* and *vERAM* files are distributed in a `.gz` compressed file format. These packages include all necessary data and no additional files or configuration is required.

2–1–4. ROUTES

    The following standards provide a baseline for acceptable routing and will be used to determine when amended routing must be issued to aircraft departing, arriving, or transiting vZDC airports or airspace.

    a. The *Preferred Route Database* is an official source for currently adapted preferential routing based on a qualifying element (i.e. destination airport, departure airport, etc.). The PRD is accessed via http://www.fly.faa.gov/rmt/nfdc_preferred_routes_database.jsp. Controllers may also use FlightAware, https://www.flightaware.com, for routing information.

b. *Mandatory Routing* will be issued by the first vZDC controller to provide air traffic control service to the aircraft in accordance with the following standards:

1. *Departures from airports underlying Potomac TRACON* will be cleared via the appropriate SID. For aircraft unable to fly RNAV SIDs aircraft will be assigned the vector departure procedure with the appropriate departure fix (gate).

2. *Arrivals to Potomac TRACON served airports* will be cleared via the appropriate RNAV STAR. For aircraft unable to fly an RNAV STAR clear aircraft via a STAR appropriate for arrival direction.

3. *Aircraft with destinations of BOS, EWR, JFK, LGA, CLT, and ATL* will be assigned routing in accordance with the PRD or respective LOA.

c. *Recommended Routing* will be offered to pilots when their filed route does not comply with a published route for the city pair filed and is not subject to the restrictions of *Mandatory Routing*. While pilots are encouraged to use preferred routing when filing, controllers must use good judgement in accommodating aircraft unable or unwilling to amend routing.

d. Controllers may clear aircraft on non-standard routing traffic permitting and only after coordinating with the overlying departure controller, or center controller if the airspace is combined at center.

e. During events impacting vZDC facilities or airspace, special attention must be given to accurate routings. The Event Coordinator may prescribe additional requirements and routing restrictions to ensure effective traffic management during peak traffic periods.

Section 2. Session Standards

2–2–1. SIGN ON PROCEDURES

a. Prior to connecting to the network in a control position controllers will check in with the immediate overlying controller to coordinate the best position to open. This coordination may be conducted via TeamSpeak (preferred) or while connected using an observer callsign on the network via private message (alternate). If no overlying controller is connected, controllers may open any position they are qualified to control.

b. After determining the position that will be staffed, connect to the network using the appropriate callsign.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–5–1, Operational Callsigns.
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–5–2, Training Callsigns.
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–5–3, Observer Callsigns.
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–5–4, Staff Callsigns.

c. Verify the "Controller Information" is set correctly for the position to be worked.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, 2–2–5, Controller Information.

d. Connect to Audio for VATSIM. Monitor the frequency of the overlying controller. Do not prime the frequency for the position being opened.

e. Advise the controller that will be releasing the airspace or facility that you are ready for a Position Relief Briefing.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–2–3, Position Relief Briefings.

f. After the airspace or position is released to you prime the frequency in the controller client. If working a center or TRACON positions, ensure the cross coupling (XC) button is keyed in Audio for VATSIM.

g. If opening a TRACON or Center position, use the ATC chat function in the controller client to announce the position is now staffed and any limitations or configuration notes.

h. Publish an ATIS using vATIS. If working a TRACON or Center position, it is recommended you publish an ATIS for primary airports being served. If working a Ground or Delivery position without a Tower, the ATIS must include "suggested" for runway in use.

EXAMPLE –
"Suggested departure runway(s)."

2–2–2. SIGN OFF PROCEDURES

a. At 15 minutes before the planned sign-off time complete the following steps:

    1. In the controller client, type the command `.break` to signal to other controllers you are seeking relief or will be closing.

NOTE –
The requested break indicator will not display to controllers who connect to the network after the
.break command has been sent.

2. If working a TRACON or Center position, announce on the ATC channel the planned closing time or minutes remaining until close.

3. Notify the immediate underlying and overlying controller(s) of the planned closing, if applicable.

4. Using the controller to pilot text chat announce the planned closing time. Controllers may also announce the planned closing on frequency via voice.

5. Controllers with an ATIS published may take down the ATIS at this time to help reduce the profile or visibility of the position and avoid attracting pilots.

b. If an overlying controller is available to take the airspace, or facility, provide that controller a position relief briefing and return the airspace or facility to them. If the overlying controller that will take the airspace can accommodate the request, the leaving controller may return the airspace before the 15-minute break period has elapsed.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–2–3, Position Relief Briefings.
vZDC 7210.1C, Appendix A, Transfer of Position Responsibility.

c. If no overlying controller is available, ensure the following steps are completed once the end of the 15-minute break advisory period is reached:

1. If working a TRACON or Center position, announce on the ATC channel that the position is closed.

2. Using the controller to pilot text chat announce that the facility is closed. Controllers may also announce the closing on frequency via voice.

3. Notify the immediate underlying controller(s) that the position you were working is now closed.

2–2–3. POSITION RELIEF BRIEFINGS

a. A position relief briefing will be conducted for any of the following conditions:

1. For any position being opened that is actively covered by an overlying vZDC facility, the controller opening the position will receive a briefing from the overlying controller before assuming responsibility for the position.

2. For any position being closed that will result in responsibility for the airspace or facility being assumed by an overlying controller, the controller closing the position will provide a briefing to the controller receiving the airspace before disconnecting.

3. For any position where the working controller will be relieved and there will not be a change in airspace configuration or position.

4. Airspace being combined or decombined will follow the procedures established for opening or closing a position with an overlying controller.

b. A position relief briefing is not given to adjacent facilities or positions.

c. All position relief briefings will be conducted following the Transfer of Position Responsibility guide in Appendix A of this order and a vZDC approved briefing quick reference card (Appendix B of this order) or controller client adapted briefing checklist.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Appendix A, Transfer of Position Responsibility.
vZDC 7210.1C, Appendix B, Position Briefing Checklists.

d. Position relief briefings will be conducted verbally. It is important the relieving controller actively monitor the frequency of the controller providing the relief briefing to avoid talking over pilots on the briefer's frequency.

2–2–4. COMBINING AND DECOMBINING AIRSPACE AND POSITIONS

Sectorization ensures adequate ability to manage traffic volume. Each facility SOP defines authorized sectorization to decombine and combine to. Controllers will not decombine airspace beyond that which is authorized in the facility's SOP or by the EC during an event.

2–2–5. CONTROLLER INFORMATION

a. The following controller information is mandatory for all controllers:

```
Line 1:     $radioname()
Line 2:     Feedback? vzdc.org/feedback/new
Line 3:     [OPTIONAL – REF PARA 2-2-5b]
Line 4:     [OPTIONAL – REF PARA 2-2-5b]
```

b. The following controller information items may be included at the discretion of the controller:

1. Airports being served and specific airspace configuration remarks.

EXAMPLE –
"Providing top-down services for all of ZDC."

or

"Covering BWI, DCA, IAD, and RIC approach and departure services."

2. Expected logoff time.

3. Controller's personal live stream information.

4. Trainers may include the position they are monitoring.

c. The following restrictions and limitations apply to all controller's information:

1. No more than four lines of information may be used and no more than 76 characters total.

2. Do not include controller name or rating.

3. Do not post raw or decoded METAR data.

REFERENCE –
VATSIM GBL-POL ATC Frequency Management, Section 6, Controller Information Policy.
VATUSA DP-001, Para 6, Staff Callsign Use.

2–2–6. OBSERVING

All controllers are encouraged to connect to the live network and observe traffic at any time. Observers are limited to a visibility range of no greater than 150 nautical miles. While connected as an observer, observers will not prime any frequency. Observers may monitor any position or frequency. Controllers will connect using the callsign standard established in this order.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 2–5–3, Observer Callsigns.

Section 3. Special Activities

2–3–1. NOTICE TO AIR MISSIONS (NOTAM)

Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) may be simulated. The following policy describes the requirements and limitations for NOTAMs on the live network.

   a. NOTAMs for major airports should be simulated when possible. NOTAMs for minor airports may be simulated at the discretion of the controller.

   b. Examples of NOTAMs that may be simulated include runway closures, approach restrictions, and airspace changes. NOTAMs that are considered active on the network should be those that could be accurately replicated on the live network.

   c. NOTAMs that cannot be accurately simulated will not be forwarded to pilots or simulated on the network. For example, "non-standard hold short markings" or "missing hold short sign" would not be NOTAMs a pilot is able to effectively simulate.

   d. The official source for NOTAMs is the Federal Aviation Administration's NOTAM Search tool: https://notams.aim.faa.gov/notamSearch/.

   e. If a pilot requests an operation or clearance contrary to an actively simulated NOTAM, advise the pilot of the NOTAM in effect. If the pilot still requests to continue, the controller will permit the operation if there is no other restriction or adverse impact to other airspace users.

2–3–2. TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS (TFR)

Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) are not normally simulated. TFRs are used to create a temporary restriction on an area of airspace due to special events, emergencies, VIP movements, or other aviation hazards. Pilot requests to simulate active TFRs may be approved when requested by the pilot. Controllers will approve pilot requests for TFR activity if there will be any impact or adverse effect on other aircraft or controllers.

2–3–3. WASHINGTON D.C. SPECIAL FLIGHT RULES AREA (DC SFRA)

The Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area Special Flight Rules Area (DC SFRA) is not simulated on VATSIM. Controllers will not restrict aircraft into or out of the SFRA. SFRA mandatory participation rules and operating requirements for pilots do not apply to aircraft on VATSIM.

2–3–4. SIMULATED EMERGENCIES

Emergencies will be handled in accordance with the following guidance:

   a. All emergencies on the VATSIM network are considered simulated emergencies and will operate in accordance with the VATSIM Code of Conduct.

   b. Controllers have discretion to accept or deny an emergency based on workload and the quality of the overall simulation experience. In general, realistically simulated emergencies should be allowed provided the impact to other pilots is minimal. Emergencies that create a high demand in a high workload scenario should not be permitted.

c. In the event the controller will not accommodate the simulated emergency, the controller will inform the pilot they are unable to accommodate the emergency due to workload.

PHRASEOLOGY –
UNABLE EMERGENCY DUE TO WORKLOAD. PLEASE CANCEL THE EMERGENCY OR DISCONNECT.

d. When a simulated emergency is authorized, provide the maximum assistance to the aircraft, and enlist the services of adjacent facilities as required. When workload permits, obtain the following information from the pilot:

1. Nature of the emergency.

2. Pilot intentions.

3. Fuel remaining in time.

4. Number of persons on board.

Section 4. Controller in Charge

2–4–1. DESIGNATION

The Controller in Charge (CIC) is the controller designated operationally responsible for all operations within vZDC at any given time.

   a. *Non-Event* operations, the CIC will be the most senior, non-visiting, controller working Washington Center, if staffed. If Washington Center is not staffed, the most senior controller online at the time will assume CIC responsibilities.

   b. *Event* operations will have a designated CIC. The Events Coordinator will designate a controller as CIC, if the EC is not assuming the duties of CIC.

2–4–2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The duties and responsibilities of the controller performing CIC include:

   a. Overall coordination with adjacent facilities.

   b. Assistance with problem pilots (individual controllers will still file incident reports as necessary).

   c. Coordinate staffing changes and accommodate controller reliefs.

   d. Communicate with VATSIM Supervisors regarding technical issues.

   e. For scheduled operations, report late controllers to the EC.

   f. Controllers may receive a CIC Events Endorsement by emailing events@vzdc.org. When endorsed by the EC, the following additional duties may be performed:

      1. Assign event positions.

      2. Represent vZDC at VATUSA operations and planning meetings.

      3. Conduct the event briefing.

      4. Perform the Traffic Management Unit (TMU) function for vZDC events.

Section 5. Communications

2–5–1. OPERATIONAL CALLSIGNS

a. Controllers will use only the approved callsigns and frequencies prescribed in facility SOPs. For ATCT facilities where vZDC does not maintain a published SOP, controllers will use the published callsign and frequency found in the current flight information publications.

b. Relieving controllers will connect with the defined relief callsign when prescribed in facility SOPs. If a relief callsign has not been designated, controllers will connect add the number one (1) to the sector field of the callsign.

EXAMPLE –
The relief controller for ILM_GND will connect as ILM_1_GND.

2–5–2. TRAINING CALLSIGNS

Trainers and trainees will refer to the Training Order for callsigns used during training events.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 3120.4, Para 5-1-3, Callsign Usage While Training on Live Network.
vZDC 3120.4, Para 5-1-4, Callsign Usage While Training on Sweatbox.

2–5–3. OBSERVER CALLSIGNS

Any controller may connect to the network to observe current live network traffic and monitor operations. When connecting as an observer, controllers will use "ZDC" as the facility identifier, the controllers operating initials in the sector field, and "OBS" as the callsign suffix.

EXAMPLE –
Controller operating initials "XY" would connect as "ZDC_XY_OBS."

2–5–4. STAFF CALLSIGNS

a. Staff members may use the approved staff office abbreviation following the ZDC prefix.

EXAMPLE –
ATM would connect as "ZDC_ATM."

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Chapter 1.Section 4, Administrative Positions.

b. Trainers may use the ZDC prefix, operating initials in the sector field, and trainer type abbreviation suffix in lieu of the standard observer callsign.

EXAMPLE –
Instructor with operating initials "YZ" would connect as "ZDC_YZ_INS."

2–5–5. FREQUENCIES

Controllers will only use approved frequencies while controlling on the VATSIM network. Approved frequencies are found in the in the facility SOP. In the case of ATCTs where no published SOP exists Controllers will use the published frequencies as found in the current chart

supplement. Controllers found in violation of this policy will be issued a verbal warning and be asked to correct the mistake as soon as possible.

2–5–6. INTRAFACILITY COMMUNICATIONS

Intrafacility communication includes all communication between facilities under the area of responsibility of vZDC. All communication within vZDC is conducted utilizing the vZDC TeamSpeak server. Text messaging through TeamSpeak, ATC Client Chat, or Discord may be utilized as an alternate means of communication if unable to affect the necessary communication via TeamSpeak.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 4–2–1, TeamSpeak.

2–5–7. INTERFACILITY COMMUNICATIONS

vZDC does not utilize the native controller to controller communication functionality built in the controller clients. For interfacility communication, controllers may connect to that facilities TeamSpeak server or use ATC client-based text chat capabilities.

Chapter 3. Administrative Policy

Section 1. Controller Roster

3–1–1. JOINING

Controllers seeking to join vZDC must complete the request through the VATUSA website.

3–1–2. OPERATING INITIALS

Controller operating initials will be assigned after assignment to vZDC. To request specific operating initials, contact the DATM. No two controllers will be assigned the same operating initials within the facility.

3–1–3. REMOVAL FOR CAUSE

   a. Controllers may be removed from the Washington ARTCC roster with cause by the ATM for any reason outlined in VATSIM's CoC, CoR, VATUSA's policies, or any the following reasons:

   1. Misrepresentation, to include cheating, lying, using a fake name, or using someone else's name.

   2. Disrespectful language or conduct towards other vZDC members or staff.

   3. Deliberate noncompliance with the polices of this order.

   4. Controlling above their certified level or in a position they have not otherwise been endorsed or approved to work.

   5. Unprofessional behavior on the VATSIM network or any vZDC communication platform.

   b. Controllers facing removal for cause will be provided an opportunity to discuss the reason for removal, to include intent to remove to the ATM.

3–1–4. REMOVAL FOR INACTIVITY

Controllers may be removed from vZDC for failure to meet the minimum activity requirements defined in this order.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 7210.1C, Para 3–2–1, Minimum Monthly Activity.

Section 2. Activity Requirements

3–2–1. MINIMUM MONTHLY ACTIVITY

All controllers holding a certification within vZDC, including visiting controllers, must control for two (2) hours every thirty (30) days.

3–2–2. MINIMUM SESSION LENGTH

All controlling sessions on the live network must be a minimum of 60 minutes.

3–2–3. LACK OF ACTIVITY

    a. *Controllers with a certification* within vZDC may be removed from the roster for inactivity. Any controller that fails to meet the minimum monthly activity requirement will:

        1. Receive a warning email from the DATM (not receiving this email does not qualify as grounds for appeal for the roster removal).

        2. The controller has 14 days beginning from the first day of the month immediately following the month that the minimum monthly activity requirement was not met to regain active status by meeting the minimum hourly requirement.

        3. The hours logged during the grace period do not count towards the monthly activity requirement for the current month.

        4. Controllers that do not meet the activity requirements of this order for two consecutive months will be removed from the roster.

    b. *Controllers without a certification* within vZDC must show activity by attempting to complete at least two training sessions each month. Due to training availability, it is recognized that it is occasionally possible to not be able to have trainer availability. New, transfer, or visiting controllers without any vZDC certifications may be removed if any of the following occur:

        1. Have not requested training within 30 days of joining vZDC.

        2. Have not requested training within 30 days of the previous training session.

        3. Have not contacted the ATM or DATM to request an LOA within 30 days of joining with sufficient cause.

        4. Have repeatedly been either late, unprepared, or no-show training sessions.

3–2–4. RETURNING FROM EXTENDED ABSENCE

Controllers away from the facility for more than one month are subject to returning controller standards. Refer to the vZDC Training Order for additional information.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 3120.4, Para 3-4-2, Less Than Six Months Away.
vZDC 3120.4, Para 3-4-3, Not More Than 12 Months Away.
vZDC 3120.4, Para 3-4-4, More Than 12 Months Away.

Section 3. Conduct

3–3–1. CONTROLLER PROFESSIONALISM

All members will abide by all VATSIM CoC, CoR, and VATUSA conduct policies. Additionally, vZDC reserves the right to restrict members' usage of the message boards, website, Discord and TeamSpeak server.

3–3–2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The ATM is responsible for conflict resolution. All incident reports are confidential and only seen by vZDC Senior Staff (ATM, DATM, TA). If a conflict between controllers arises the following procedures will be applied:

   a. Attempt to resolve the issue directly with the other controller.

   b. If unable to resolve the conflict, file an incident report on the vZDC website. The incident report form is found under the Controller Dashboard section.

   c. After filing an incident report, you may receive an email from a senior staff member seeking clarification or additional information. A request to setup a meeting to discuss the issue may also be requested.

3–3–3. PILOT INTERACTION

   a. VATSIM is a learning environment, designed to be a welcoming, inclusive, and understanding place for new and experienced pilots to become familiar with and simulate the National Airspace System. There is absolutely no tolerance for rude, condescending, or disrespect toward pilots or controllers within vZDC and VATSIM.

   b. Controllers must attempt to work with pilots, offering help and guidance in any way possible. If a pilots intentional or unintentional actions create a negative impact for other members; take appropriate action up to and including involving a VATSIM Supervisor. Before involving VATSIM Supervisors consider the following:

      1. Is the pilot trying to comply? If yes, continue to exercise patience and provide assistance workload permitting. Assistance can include guidance on procedure, policy, or technical matters based on the issue and controller experience.

      2. Can another controller, offline controller, or vZDC staff member assist? Other experienced controllers and staff members may be able to assist directly with the pilot and help resolve many common issues.

      3. Will providing text instructions help? English is not the first language for many VATSIM users and busy radio communications often is difficult for even experienced users. Consider texting initial instructions until there is time to revisit with voice.

   c. In the event a pilot is non-compliant and causing operational disruptions, detracting from the simulation experience for all users, contact a VATSIM supervisor using the following procedure:

1. Initiate the VATSIM Supervisor process with "`.wallop`" in the ATC client. Include a brief description of the issue for the supervisor in the initial wallop message.

EXAMPLE –
`.wallop` *N123JB seems very new to flying, would you try to help him?*

or

`.wallop` *N456JB is unresponsive, will you try to get ahold of him?*

2. Provide the responding supervisor with any additional requested information.

Section 4. Leave of Absence

3–4–1. REQUESTING LEAVE

Any controller unable to meet the minimum activity requirements established by this order may request a Leave of Absence (LOA). To request an LOA controllers must email the ATM and the DATM and include the following information in the request:

    a. Length of LOA requested.

    b. Justification for LOA and any supporting information to assist the staff in the approval decision process.

3–4–2. DURATION

An initial LOA may be approved up to six (6) months away. Controllers may request a consecutive LOA for an additional six (6) month period. The combined time away will not exceed 12 months.

3–4–3. ENDING LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The LOA will be terminated for the following reasons:

    a. The controller notifies the ATM and DATM they wish to end their LOA and return to active status.

    b. The controller connects to the network to control.

    c. The end date of the approved LOA arrives.

Section 5. Visiting Controllers

3–5–1. APPLICATION

To initiate a visitor application, the applicant must select "Visit ZDC" from the vZDC website. Once the completed form is submitted, a records review is completed, and it's determined the controller can meet the "50%+1" rule, the applicant will be provisionally added to the vZDC Visiting Controller roster. Applicants for visiting controller status must meet the eligibility requirements of this section.

REFERENCE –
zZDC 7210.1C, Para 3–5–2, Eligibility.

3–5–2. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Visiting Controller status at vZDC, the controller must meet the following criteria:

a. Be a member of a facility.

b. Hold a rating greater than Observer (OBS).

c. Have obtained 50 hours on the current rating.

d. Been a member of the current facility for 90 days.

e. Must have held the current rating for 90 days.

3–5–3. MAJORITY TIME LIMIT RULE

Visiting controllers are subject to the minimum monthly activity requirement of this order as well as any activity requirements of their home facility. Furthermore, visiting controllers are required to control a majority of their monthly connected time at their home facility. This is referred to as the 50% + 1 rule, where 50% + 1 of hours controlling on the network are spent at the home facility.

EXAMPLE –
A controller's home facility is ZMA. For the month of July, the controller controls a total of 20 hours on the network. 11 of the 20 hours spent controlling must be at ZMA to not violate the VATSIM visiting policy (50%+1 rule).

REFERENCE –
VATSIM Transfer and Visiting Controller Policy, Section 2, Visiting Controller.

3–5–4. TRAINING

Training is not conducted for visiting controllers except for airspace and local procedures familiarization. Controlling skills below the VATSIM Global Ratings Policy (GRP) standards are cause for termination of visiting status.

Section 6. Transferring Controllers

3–6–1. PROCESSING

Once a controller transfers to vZDC has been approved through VATUSA, the new controller will be added to the vZDC roster. The training footprint for transferring controllers is provided in the vZDC Training Order.

REFERENCE –
vZDC 3120.4, Para 3-2-2, Progression.

Chapter 4. Controller Applications

Section 1. Controller Clients

4–1–1. VIRTUAL RADAR CLIENT (VRC)

Virtual Radar Client (VRC) is the primary client for tower cab positions (TWR, GND, DEL).

4–1–2. VSTARS

Virtual Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (vSTARS) is the primary client for terminal (approach/departure) control.

4–1–3. VERAM

Virtual En Route Automation Modernization (vERAM) is the primary client for en route air traffic control.

Section 2. Miscellaneous Applications

4–2–1. TEAMSPEAK

a. All controllers connected to the VATSIM network in a control (non-observer) position must be connected to the vZDC TeamSpeak server.

b. TeamSpeak is the primary voice communication platform for vZDC. This includes controller to controller coordination while controlling on the live network as well as all training on and off the network.

c. Connection information is maintained in the Controller Dashboard on the vZDC website. The server is intended for members only. Controllers will not share TeamSpeak server information with anyone outside of vZDC.

d. TeamSpeak permissions are assigned by VATSYNC. Controllers must configure their VATSYNC information at https://vatsimsync.com. The unique ID from TeamSpeak must be added in VATSYNC.

NOTE –
The vZDC website files library has a VATSYNC, TeamSpeak, and Discord configuration guide.

e. The following rules apply to all controllers. Failure to follow these rules may result in disciplinary action.

1. All users must join the TeamSpeak server using the name associated with their VATSIM account.

2. Anonymous users will be kicked without warning and banned upon reconnecting anonymously.

3. While streaming while controlling is allowed and encouraged, streaming audio from TeamSpeak is not allowed. Streaming TeamSpeak audio requires written permission from the ATM and will only be granted for the official use of vZDC promotional materials.

4. Controlling rooms are limited to controlling only. Conversations not related to the operation are not permitted.

f. vZDC staff may grant "guest" tags to invited guests to access the TeamSpeak server. The guest tag is at the discretion of vZDC staff and may be revoked at any time.

4–2–2. DISCORD

a. vZDC maintains a Discord server for controllers. Discord is the secondary voice communication platform in the event the TeamSpeak server is unavailable.

b. Discord connection information is in the Controller Dashboard section of the vZDC website. The server is intended for members only. Controllers must not share the Discord server information outside of vZDC.

c. Discord permissions are assigned by VATSYNC. Signup via VATSYNC to have permissions assigned. Visit https://vatsimsync.com/ to setup unique ID with the server.

Chapter 5. Events

Section 1. Execution

5–1–1. OVERVIEW

Events are hosted by various elements with affiliation to VATSIM. The size and scope of events varies greatly. vZDC strives to support all organizations utilizing Washington ARTCC airspace to the extent possible.

5–1–2. PUBLICATION OF EVENTS

Calendars are maintained by the EC. Events requiring advanced sign up are posted on the vZDC website. The EC may add manning requests to Discord when a formal event page or sign up is not maintained.

5–1–3. EXPECTATIONS

Events play a large role in the reputation of vZDC. Successful events reflect positively on the facility and its controllers and help attract pilots to future events and to choose vZDC outside of event times. The following are some of the expectations for all controllers during events:

a. Arrive on time for the event briefing. Standard briefing time is 30 minutes prior to the advertised event start time. Briefings are conducted in TeamSpeak.

b. Remain connected and provide ATC services at the position assigned for the duration of the event, or the duration of the slot assigned.

c. Remain professional, proficient, and respectful always.

5–1–4. SCALED REDUCTION IN SERVICES

a. The EC will coordinate a scaled reduction in ATC services during the last 30 minutes of an event.

b. The EC may request controllers to extend beyond the published event end time to accommodate additional pilots and avoid an abrupt disruption to ATC services. Controllers will not be penalized for leaving the event at the originally scheduled position assignment end time.

c. "ATC Zero" is detrimental to the facility and pilots participating in the event. To avoid significant disruption and to maintain the reputation of the facility, it is important that all controllers try to help avoid an ATC Zero situation immediately following an event.

Section 2. Staffing

5–2–1. SIGN UP PROCESS

All controllers may sign up for ARTCC designated events through the events registration form on the events page on the vZDC website.

   a. Controllers will sign up using their VATSIM rating (S1, S2, S3, C1+).

   b. Controllers must have the certification or endorsement for the position being signed up for. Anticipated certifications will not count as actual certifications and the sign up discarded.

   c. Position assignments are not assigned first come, first served. The EC will assign positions based on the activity of the controller, prior positions assigned, and ultimately the needs of the facility.

   d. Controllers that have not been assigned a position will be considered "reserve" controllers and will be assigned a position during the event briefing and may cover other positions or fill in for any assigned controllers that do not report.

   e. The EC will make every effort to ensure registered controllers not assigned a position are provided priority assignment at the next event.

   f. Controllers must only signup when they are confident they will be able to attend.

5–2–2. CHANGES IN AVAILABILITY

If circumstances arise that prevent a controller assigned a position for an event to be unable to attend in its entirety, or not attend during the assigned time, the controller must notify the EC and comply with the following notification protocol:

   a. More than 48 hours from the start of the event:

      1. Cancel the sign up on the website.

      2. Email the EC at events@vzdc.org and include name, CID, and reason for cancelling the sign up.

   b. Less than 48 hours but more than 1 hour from the start of the event:

      1. Attempt to find a replacement controller.

      2. Email the EC at events@vzdc.org and include name, CID, and reason for cancelling the sign up.

   c. Less than 1 hour from the start of the event, attempt to contact the EC via first Teamspeak, then Discord, and finally via email to notify of the cancellation.

5–2–3. FAILURE TO SHOW DURING AN EVENT

Any controlling failing to report for the event at the designated report time without adequate notification to the Senior Staff and Event Coordinator, or that repeatedly reports to events late, is

subject to disciplinary measures up to and including removal from the roster at the discretion of the ATM. All removals due to event no shows will be in accordance with this order.

5–2–4. SIGN UP SUSPENSION

Any controller that fails to notify the EC of a change in availability is subject to suspension of their event sign up privileges. The following summary of offenses and suspensions may be applied by the staff:

a. *First Offense* will result in a written warning.

b. *Second Offense* will result in a 30-day event sign up suspension.

c. *Third Offense* will result in a 90-day event sign up suspension.

d. *Subsequent Offenses* will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the EC.

5–2–5. SIGN UP SUSPENSION APPEAL

Controllers whose event sign up privileges have been suspended have the right to appeal using the following process:

a. Within 48 hours of the suspension, submit a written appeal to the ATM via email including the following information:

1. Controller's name.

2. Controller ID (CID).

3. Event Name.

4. Event Date.

5. Justification for overturning the suspension.

b. The ATM will take all information into consideration and make a decision regarding the suspension.

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APPENDIX A. TRANSFER OF POSITION RESPONSIBILITY

STEP 1 – PREVIEW THE POSITION	
Relieving Controller (Opening)	**Controller Being Relieved (Closing)**
1. Review current weather and posted ATIS. **2.** Monitor the controller that will provide the relief briefing's frequency and observe current traffic. **3.** Advise the controller that will provide the briefing you have previewed the position and are ready for a briefing.	
STEP 2 – VERBAL BRIEFING (REF APPENDIX B BRIEFING CHECKLIST)	
	1. Brief the relieving controller on any non-normal conditions or special procedures (non-standard frequencies, airspace configuration/sectorizations, etc.) **2.** Brief current weather conditions and impacting NOTAMs at any Major facility the relieving controller will assume responsibility for and any other airports determined necessary. **3.** Brief on all traffic that will be the responsibility of the relieving controller.
4. Ask questions necessary to ensure a complete understanding of the operational situation.	**5.** Completely answer any questions asked.
STEP 3 – ASSUMPTION OF POSITION RESPONSIBILITY	
1. Make a statement or otherwise indicate to the controller being relieved that position responsibility has been assumed. *Example: "No questions, I have the airspace."*	
	2. Acknowledge that the relieving controller is now responsible and has the airspace or frequency. *Example: "You have the airspace."*
3. "Prime" the frequency for the position responsibility has been assumed for.	**4.** Un-prime the frequency, if applicable. Continue to monitor the relieving controller when possible.
STEP 4 – REVIEW THE POSITION	
	1. If applicable, switch any aircraft on your frequency to the relieving controller's frequency.
2. Verify client configuration is correct and that frequencies are functioning. **3.** If aircraft may be on the briefing controller's frequency verify they make the switch. Request the relieved controller to switch any aircraft that you are not able to contact.	
	4. Switch aircraft to the relieving controller's frequency as requested and as applicable.

APPENDIX B. POSITION BRIEFING CHECKLISTS

CAB	TRACON	CENTER
REVIEW CAB STAFFING	REVIEW STAFFED ATC ABOVE/BELOW	ADJACENT ARTCCS ON AND SECTORIZATION
REVIEW STAFFED ATC ABOVE THE TOWER	STATUS OF AUTOMATIC DEPARTURES	UNDERLYING TRACON AND ATCT STAFFING
STATUS OF AUTOMATIC DEPARTURES	TRAFFIC MGMT INITATIVES	TRAFFIC MGMT INITATIVES
TRAFFIC MGMT INITATIVES	NOTAMS & SAA/SUA	NOTAMS & SAA/SUA
NOTAMS & SAA/SUA	LANDING DIRECTION AT CONTROLLED AIRPORTS	LANDING DIRECTION AT BWI, DCA, IAD, RIC, RDU
CURRENT ATIS, OBSERVATION AND SPECIAL AIRFIELD NOTES	WEATHER (VFR/MVFR/IFR) & VISUAL APPROACH USE	WEATHER (VFR/MVFR/IFR)
NON-STD CONDITIONS	LOW ALTIMETER AT FACILITIES OWNING FL180/ABV AIRSPACE	LOW ALTIMETER AREAS
NOTE AIRCRAFT WITH CLEARANCES	NON-STD CONDITIONS	NON-STD CONDITIONS
REVIEW ALL TRAFFIC	NOTE AIRCRAFT WITH CLEARANCES ON GROUND	NOTE AIRCRAFT WITH CLEARANCES ON GROUND
	NOTE ANY ACTIVE POINT OUTS	NOTE ANY ACTIVE POINT OUTS
	REVIEW ALL AIRBORNE TRAFFIC.	REVIEW ALL AIRBORNE TRAFFIC

Example: "BRIEFING WASHINGTON CENTER, ALL COMBINED. ATLANTA, JACKSONVILLE, AND BOSTON CENTER ONLINE. POTOMAC SPLIT WITH CHESAPEAKE AND SHENANDOAH COMBINED AT MULRR, MOUNT VERNON AND JAMES RIVER COMBINED AT OJAAY. BOSTON WANTS 20 IN TRAIL OVER JFK FOR ROBUC ARRIVALS. NO NOTAM, NO SUA. DULLES NORTH WITH THIRTY, NATIONAL NORTH, BALTIMORE EAST, RICHMOND EAST, RALEIGH WEST. VFR EVERYWHERE. FLIGHT LEVEL ONE EIGHT ZERO USABLE EVERYWHERE. NO CLEARANCES ISSUED, NO POINT OUTS. TRAFFIC IS AAL1234 DESCENDING VIA THE TRUPS, UAL321 CLIMBING OUT TO THE SOUTH, AND N705 JUST DEPARTED LANGLEY CLIMBING TO TWELVE. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? "

APPENDIX C. IMPORTANT LINKS

VATSIM
VATSIM Code of Conduct: https://www.vatsim.net/documents/code-of-conduct
VATSIM Code of Regulations: https://www.vatsim.net/documents/code-of-regulations
VATSIM Global Ratings Policy: https://www.vatsim.net/documents/global-ratings-policy

VATUSA
VATUSA: https://www.vatusa.net/
VATUSA Academy: https://academy.vatusa.net/my/

vZDC
vZDC website: https://www.vzdc.org/
vZDC Academy Website: https://academy.vatusa.net/course/index.php?categoryid=71

Controller Software
VRC: https://vrc.rosscarlson.dev/
vSTARS: https://vstars.rosscarlson.dev/
vERAM: https://veram.rosscarlson.dev/
vATIS: https://vatis.clowd.io/#/
AFV: https://audio.vatsim.net/
TeamSpeak: https://www.teamspeak.com/en/
Discord: https://discord.com/

APPENDIX D. STAFF COMMUNICATION

OFFICE	ABBREVIATION	EMAIL
Air Traffic Manager	ATM	atm@vzdc.org
Deputy Air Traffic Manager	DATM	datm@vzdc.org
Training Administrator	TA	ta@vzdc.org
Events Coordinator	EC	ec@vzdc.org
Facilities Engineer	FE	facilities@vzdc.org
Webmaster	WM	wm@vzdc.org

GROUP	EMAIL
Senior Staff (ATM/DATM/TA)	srstaff@vzdc.org
Events Team	events@vzdc.org
Instructors	instructors@vzdc.org
Mentors	mentors@vzdc.org
Training Team	training@vzdc.org