

# NAV CANADA

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Dear,

## **SUBJECT: CRITERIA FOR ICAO THREE-LETTER DESIGNATORS AND CALL SIGNS**

ICAO three-letter designators and call signs are intended for use by aircraft operating agencies, as well as aeronautical authorities and services that operate aircraft internationally and over the AFTN network.

NAV CANADA is designated as the focal point for the assignment of ICAO designators to Canadian aircraft operators. We ask that operators requesting an ICAO designator contact the NAV CANADA focal point first and provide us with a list of suggested call signs so we can check them against those used by civil aircraft operators (both international and domestic), military aircraft and local law enforcement agencies.

On behalf of ICAO, NAV CANADA ensures due diligence in checking for the validity of the aircraft operator or aeronautical service. This process allows NAV CANADA to have current and accurate information for the operators and services who exercise the privilege of using a unique flight ident and call sign for their operations. In the event call sign confusion occurs or safety is compromised, NAV CANADA will ensure those operators take measures to avoid it happening again. In some cases, one operator may need to change their designator.

### **1. Process**

- a) When all the necessary information has been received by the NAV CANADA focal point (see page 3 for the contact information) and minimum requirements have been met, the requested call sign(s) will be checked against other existing call signs.  
**Note:** this may take a while considering the long list of currently assigned designators.
- b) As soon as a call sign has been agreed upon between NAV CANADA Operations and the air operator, the application through the [ICAO 3LD website](#) can begin.
- c) The air operator must first “buy a PIN” through the [ICAO store](#). This PIN is used to submit a form on the ICAO 3LD website. **Note:** a PIN is not required to change the air operator’s name if everything else remains the same.
- d) The 3LD request is automatically sent to the focal point for approval. If the air operator has coordinated with the focal point appropriately, the approval should be immediate. If not, **steps a) to d) need to be followed before the focal point will approve the 3LD submission.**
- e) When the focal point accepts the request through the ICAO 3LD website, the final approval is determined by ICAO.

The following are rules for registration of ICAO designators for Canadian operators:

## 2. General

- a) ICAO designators are only approved for use by Canadian air operators with a valid (Air or Private) Operating Certificate (i.e. CAR 604 or Part VII) or for the purpose of providing Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunication Network (AFTN) services.
- b) The same designator will not be registered for, or used by, more than one aircraft operating agency, aeronautical authority or service.
- c) No more than one three-letter designator or call sign will be registered for, or used by, each aircraft operating agency, aeronautical authority or service.
- d) When a designator is no longer required, NAV CANADA should be informed immediately. Any such designator so released will not be reassigned for at least 60 days after ICAO has been notified.

## 3. Three-Letter Designators

- a) Three-letter designators are only approved for use by air operators with a valid operating certificate or for the purpose of providing Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunication Network (AFTN) services and which in the opinion of NAV CANADA have a need for an exclusive designator;
- b) A three-letter designator should reflect to the maximum extent practicable, the name of the aircraft operating agency or call sign, or the aeronautical service for which it is requested.

## 4. Call Signs (referred to as “telephony designator” by ICAO)

- a) The call sign should resemble the name of the aircraft operating agency or its function and be distinct and dissimilar from any other already assigned. Ideally it should reflect a correlation between the three-letter designator and the name of the aircraft operator or its function.
- b) In order to reduce the length of transmission the call sign should be brief, comprising if possible one word of two or three syllables. It should not exceed two words;
- c) Three-letter designators may not be used in phonetic form as call signs; however, those of long standing may be retained provided an acceptable alphabetic representation is used (e.g. KAY DEE for KD Air); and
- d) Call signs that represent aircraft manufacturers or types may not be used.

**Note:** In the selection of the flight identification number the following is recommended:

- a) Flight numbers should be kept as short as possible and usually be limited to three figures;
- b) Flight numbers should be selected bearing in mind the flight numbers already in use by other operating agencies in the intended control environments; and
- c) When practicable flight numbers other than those ending in a zero or five should be used.
- d) Flight numbers used by Canadian air operators are not subject to approval. However, for flight planning purposes, the flight ident, including the 3-letter designator, must be a minimum of three and a maximum of seven characters.

## 5. Required Information

- a) The requested call sign
- b) The name and address of the company;
- c) The name and contact information of a person authorized to represent the company;
- d) A list of the fleet the company operates including the aircraft type and civil aircraft registrations (NAV CANADA will use this information to verify flight activity);
- e) A business case stating the operational need for an ICAO designator.
- f) A complete copy of the Private or Air Operating Certificate issued by Transport Canada; or a legal corporate document if only applying for an AFTN address; and
- g) A copy of their flight schedule or flight log indicating the average number of flights per week.

**Note:** As a guideline, NAV CANADA will consider operators with a minimum number of 20 flights per week.

Upon receiving the required information above, NAV CANADA will notify the air operator within 10 business days whether the application meets approval. Although NAV CANADA facilitates the approval process by determining which air operators are suitable for an exclusive designator, ultimately ICAO must approve both the 3-Letter designator and call sign.

**6. If Approved:**

- a) ICAO will send the focal point an approval notice. A copy of the notice will be provided to the applicant for their records.
- b) Designator assignments may be cancelled by NAV CANADA where a conflict arises leading to a safety concern in relation to the management of air traffic services, or where an operator is no longer believed to be a valid operation.

If more detailed information is required, please contact me at [mcilwak@navcanada.ca](mailto:mcilwak@navcanada.ca) or (613) 563-5963.

Sincerely,

Kelly McIlwaine  
Regulatory and International Planning Specialist  
ATS Regulatory Coordination  
Standards Procedures & International Coordination