

New York air traffic controllers filmed 'sleeping on the job'

By Daily Mail Reporter | 24 February 2012

Air traffic controllers at a New York airport have been caught on camera apparently sleeping while on duty.

The controllers were also filmed allegedly reading, texting and working on laptops at Westchester County Airport.

The secretly captured video and photos were made by an unnamed employee at the White Plains airport and were provided to MyFoxNY TV station.



This air traffic controller at Westchester County Airport appears to be fast asleep while he is supposed to be on duty

The footage appears to show up to 10 air traffic controllers sleeping in the control tower, reading books, playing with their mobiles or looking at their laptops while they should have been watching the skies.

The source, who works as a controller in the tower, told My Fox NY, 'I'm upset and extremely concerned with things taking place at Westchester tower.'

'It poses an extreme threat to public safety. If someone's not paying 100 per cent attention, between separating arriving and departing air traffic, you could have a near miss or worse.'

¹ **aiR NOTE:** Note the napping controller is wearing a headset... a wire leads to the ear and a clear boom mic leads downward to the mouth area. This is not while on a break, but while working an ATC position.

In the video a controller is shown with his head down on a desk, another piece of footage appears to show another controller fast asleep while he was supposed to be working ground control.



This image is just one of the secretly obtained clips, and apparently shows this employee taking a nap on the job at the tower



Still wearing his headphones, this air controller appears to be on duty while he gets his head down on the desk²

² aiR NOTE: Although the headsets are light and generally comfortable to wear, no controller on a 'break' napping in the rear area of a tower cab would wear a headset on his ear. This controller was responsible for a position.



The video and photos have been provided to the TV station by an unnamed employee at the White Plains airport³

Other footage shows one controller apparently playing on a smart phones while the other controller appears to have fallen asleep while reading his book.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules state that 'Cell phones must be in the off position while in the operation. Personal reading material and electronic devices are not permitted in operational areas.'

In a statement to the TV station, the FAA said that the elevator at the Westchester tower is out of service and because the permanent break room is eight flights downstairs, the controllers union and the FAA agreed to make the back portion of the tower the temporary break room.



The footage appears to show up to 10 air traffic controllers sleeping in the control tower

³ aiR NOTE: This controller is also photographed while 'working' his ATC position. Note the shiny black object and rectangular white button on his hip area: this is the switch for his headset, for radio communications.



The source, who also works as a controller in the tower, took action over concerns about 'public safety' and the risk of a collision

'The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited in the tower, however, employees have temporarily been permitted to use devices for texting and email only on their personal breaks, but not when on position directing air traffic,' an FAA spokesperson said.

However, the source claims the video shows controllers sleeping and using electronic devices while on duty in the tower.

Controllers have been sleeping and using distracting devices at the Westchester tower for years, well before the elevator broke, the source added.

Last March the pilot of an American Airlines jet was forced to land blind at Reagan National airport because the controller was asleep.

After a number of similar incidents, the rules were changed in April and air traffic controllers were given an extra hour to rest between shifts.

Controllers now get nine hours break instead of eight and swapping of shifts that would result in a shorter break are no longer allowed.

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