

# NEWS

## AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

### Air Traffic Control in the US Still Runs on Windows 95 and Floppy Disks

**The Federal Aviation Administration is seeking contractors to modernize its decades-old computer systems within four years.**

FAA administrator Chris Rocheleau told the House Appropriations Committee that the Federal Aviation Administration plans to replace its aging air traffic control systems, which still rely on floppy disks and Windows 95 computers, Tom's Hardware [reports](#). The agency has issued a Request for Information to gather proposals from companies willing to tackle the massive infrastructure overhaul.

"The whole idea is to replace the system. No more floppy disks or paper strips," Rocheleau said during the committee hearing. US transportation secretary Sean Duffy called the project "the most important infrastructure project that we've had in this country for decades," describing it as a bipartisan priority. Most air traffic control towers and facilities across the US currently operate with technology that seems frozen in the 20th century, although that isn't necessarily a bad thing—when it works. Some controllers currently use paper strips to track aircraft movements and transfer data between systems using floppy disks, while their computers run Microsoft's Windows 95 operating system, which launched in 1995.

As Tom's Hardware notes, modernization of the system is broadly popular. Sheldon Jacobson, a University of Illinois professor who has studied risks in aviation, says that the system works remarkably well as is but that an upgrade is still critical, according to NPR. The aviation industry coalition Modern Skies has been pushing for ATC modernization and recently released an advertisement highlighting the outdated technology.

While the vintage systems may have inadvertently protected air traffic control from widespread outages like the CrowdStrike incident that disrupted modern computer systems globally in 2024, agency officials say 51 of the FAA's 138 systems are unsustainable due to outdated functionality and a lack of spare parts.

The FAA isn't alone in clinging to floppy disk technology. San Francisco's train control system still runs on DOS loaded from 5.25-inch floppy disks, with upgrades not expected until 2030 due to budget constraints. Japan has also struggled in recent years to modernize government record systems that use floppy disks

### if It Ain't Broke?

Modernizing the air traffic control system presents engineering challenges that extend far beyond simply installing newer computers. Unlike typical IT upgrades, ATC systems must maintain continuous 24/7 operation, because shutting down facilities for maintenance could compromise aviation safety. This uptime requirement eliminates the possibility of traditional system replacement approaches where old hardware gets swapped out during scheduled downtime. The replacement systems must also meet security requirements to resist cyberattacks. A successful breach of air traffic control infrastructure could paralyze national aviation networks, resulting in cascading effects that impact transportation, commerce, and emergency services. And yet not everyone is convinced the planned massive overhaul will achieve the desired effects. In an NPR report on the issue, aviation industry analyst Robert W. Mann Jr. expressed skepticism about whether new systems will actually materialize.

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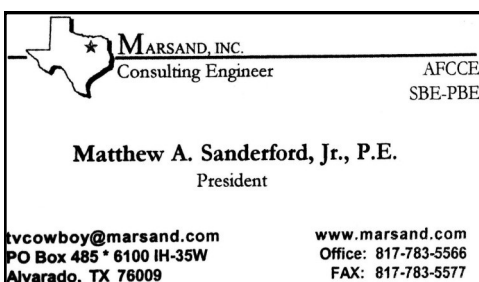
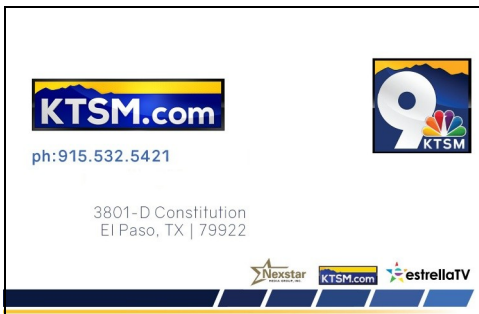
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"This has been the same mantra for the past 30 years. Give them more money. They'll build the new system. It'll work better, work harder," Mann told NPR. "And we've been doing that for well over 30 years now, and we've gotten the same results."

Still, recent failures have confirmed some vulnerabilities in the aging system. A January 2023 outage in the FAA's Notice to Airmen system forced the grounding of every flight nationwide for more than two hours. Experts blamed the failure on aging infrastructure and damaged database files, with sources telling CNN at the time that budget constraints had repeatedly delayed needed tech refreshes. More recently, radar and communication outages led to hundreds of delays and cancellations at Newark Liberty International Airport, with a wiring failure being cited as one cause.

The US Transportation Department has set a four-year timeline for completing the modernization project, though industry experts question whether this schedule is realistic given the scope and complexity involved. According to the NPR report, Jacobson thinks the administration's announced timeline is "wildly optimistic," especially given the absence of a price tag for the sweeping plan.

The FAA has announced several "Industry Days" where companies can present their technologies and proposals to department officials. The White House has not yet disclosed the expected cost of the modernization effort. Despite the financial uncertainty, Duffy emphasized the perceived urgency of the project: "Everyone agrees—this is nonpartisan. Everyone knows we have to do it."

*This story originally appeared on Ars Technica.*

Benj Edwards, ARS Technica Jun. 12, 2025

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## EL PASO, TX SBE CHAPTER 38 MEETING MINUTE

DATE 05/13/2025 LOCATION: ZOOM AT ANTONIO'S

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:** 11:00 AM, BY ANTONIO CASTRO. WE WERE 10 (TEN) ATTENDANTS.

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY:** MINUTES ON THE APRIL 2025 NEWS-LETTER. ACCEPTED BY NORBERT MILES, SECONDED BY MARIO JIMENEZ.

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER:** \$ 4,034.43 IN THE BANK AFTER RENEWING MEMBERSHIPS. ACCEPTED BY BRUNO CRUZ, SECONDED BY MICHAEL RIVERA.

**REPORT OF THE CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE:** UPDATED THE DATES OF FUTURE EXAMS IN JUNE.

**REPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:** ELIAS VENTANILLA TO INVITE "TELEMUNDO 48" AS SUSTAINING MEMBER. DAVID SANDERFORD RETURNED IN HONOR OF HIS DAD, MATH SANDERFORD, FORMER "MARSAND"

**REPORT OF THE FREQUENCY COORDINATOR COMMITTEE:**  
**NO REPORT.**

**REPORT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:** NO SCHOLARSHIP THIS YEAR. FUNDS WILL BE NEEDED FOR THE ENNES WORKSHOP SPONSORSHIP.

**REPORT OF THE WEBSITE COMMITTEE:** NOW 5315 VS. 5271 EQUAL TO 34 HITS. TO PROMOTE THE 2025 ENNES WORKSHOP.

**REPORT OF THE EAS CHAIRMAN:** TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO EAS MONTHLY TESTS CAME FINE. POSSIBLE EAS SEMINAR TO BE ORGANIZED BY KLAQ AT THE KFOX STUDIOS (IF APPROVED).

**REPORT OF THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE:** DAN MERWIN FROM BROADCAST TELECOM MADE A PRESENTATION. .

**NEW BUSINESS OR ANY ITEMS FOR THE CHAPTER INTEREST:** NEXT MEETING TO HOLD NEW OFFICERS ELECTION. "ENNES WORKSHOP" TO BE HELD IN JUNE 6, 2025

**OTHER.** ELECTION OF THE 2025 CHAPTER 38 ENGINEER OF THE YEAR WAS WON BY GLENN LEFFLER.

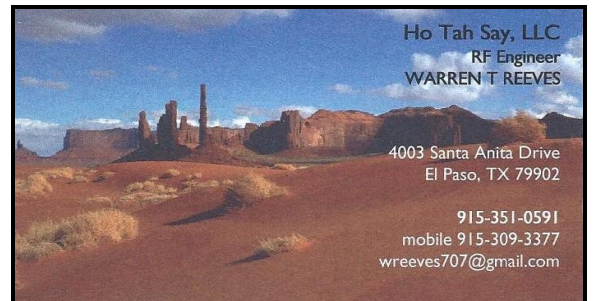
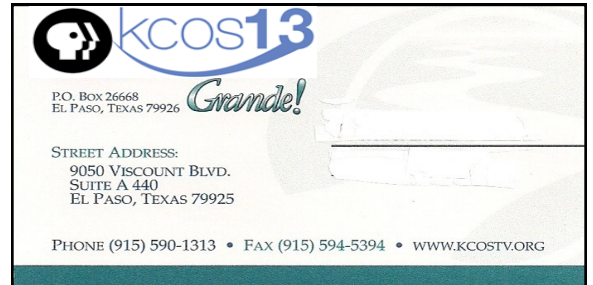
**NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION:** JUNE 8, TIME AND PLACE T.B.A.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** AT 11:15 AM.

**NOTE: NO MINUTES FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE AND NO MEETING BECAUSE OF ENNES WORKSHOP.**



# JUNE PROGRAM



THE MAY CHAPTER 38 MEETING WAS IN THE ZOOM MODE, AT ANTONIO'S WHERE WE HAD AN ATTENDANCE OF 10 (TTEN) RADIO AND TV ENGINEERS. WE ENJOY THE PRESENTATION OF OUR GUEST DAN MERWIN FROM BROADCAST TELECOM

NOW FOR JUNE WE DID NOT HAVE OUR REGULAR MEETING, INSTEAD WE MET AT THE 2025 EL PASO ENNES WORKSHOP AT THE AIRPORT WYNDHAM HOTEL. PRESENTATIONS WERE OF FIRST CLASS. ATTENDANCE WERE 25.

WHEN: FRIDAY JUNE 6.

WHERE: WYNDHAM HOTEL.

TIME: FROM 7:30 AM TO 5 PM.

SEE AND HEAR YOU THERE