

US regulator points to progress in allowing 5G at more airports

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A cellular tower disguised as a palm tree at Los Angeles International Airport is pictured in January 2022 as aviation regulators and telecom companies work to address safety concerns connected to the activation of 5G service.

US aviation officials reported progress Friday on allowing more 5G

service near airports following negotiations with telecommunications providers, but airlines said there were still some disruptions.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) praised Verizon and AT&T for providing "more precise data about the exact location of wireless transmitters," the agency said in a statement.

The data has permitted the FAA to narrow the territory where it still has safety questions and "enable the wireless providers to safely turn on more towers as they deploy new 5G service in major markets across the United States," the regulator said.

Telecom firms have spent tens of billions of dollars to obtain 5G licenses, but were forced to delay the launch following an outcry from the aviation industry warning of massive disruptions.

At issue is the possibility 5G signals will interfere with radio altimeters that allow aircraft to conduct low-visibility landings.

Since Verizon and AT&T agreed on January 18 to delay 5G implementation at some airports, the FAA has been gradually clearing more aircraft following a review.

The agency said about 90 percent of US commercial aircraft have been cleared for "most" low-visibility approaches in areas with 5G, and on Thursday, the Boeing 737 MAX became the latest model to receive that approval.

"The altimeter approvals we issued do not cover every runway at every airport," the FAA said in response to questions. "As we're able to analyze more data from the spectrum holders, we are able to refine the models that determine what safety restrictions are necessary."

Airlines for America, a Washington lobbying group, said its work with stakeholders was ongoing.

"While there is much work still to be done, the ongoing collaboration between the FAA, the aviation industry and the telecom companies is helping to safely reduce air travel and shipping disruptions as additional 5G towers are activated," Airlines for America said.

JetBlue Chief Executive Robin Hayes said Thursday a "very low percentage" of its flights are affected by current restrictions relating to 5G.

"The big crisis was averted," Hayes said on a conference call with analysts, but added that the [aviation](#) issues related to the 5G ramp-up are "iterative" and there could be other impacts down the road.

AT&T and Verizon referred questions to CTIA, another Washington lobby, which praised the FAA's latest statement.

"This is a positive development that highlights the considerable progress the wireless industry, [aviation industry](#), FAA and FCC are making to ensure robust 5G service and safe flights," CTIA said.

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