

# FAA clears Verizon and AT&T to turn on more 5G cell towers

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A passenger uses a laptop aboard a commercial airline flight from Boston to Atlanta on July 1, 2017. Concern about new high-speed wireless service interfering with airplanes appears to be easing. Federal safety regulators said Friday, Jan. 28, 2022 they have cleared the way for Verizon and AT&T to turn on more 5G towers. Credit: AP Photo/Bill Sikes, File

Federal safety regulators say they have cleared the way for Verizon and AT&T to power up more towers for new 5G service without causing radio interference with airplanes.

The Federal Aviation Administration said Friday that it took the steps after receiving details from the telecommunications companies about the location of wireless transmitters.

The FAA's move will let the companies activate 5G cell towers closer to airports without hindering the ability of planes to land during poor weather.

Verizon and AT&T declined to comment. Nick Ludlum, a spokesman for the telecommunications trade group CTIA, called it 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."

The trade group Airlines for America issued a similar statement. Spokesman Carter Yang added that all sides are working on "a more efficient permanent solution" that will avoid disrupting air traffic as more 5G towers are activated.

Aviation groups and the FAA had warned that the companies' 5G service, which uses part of the radio spectrum called C-Band, was too close to the spectrum range used by instruments that measure the height of planes above the ground—crucial information for landing in low visibility.

Verizon and AT&T, which spent billions to build 5G networks, disputed the FAA's conclusions. But they twice agreed to delay launching new 5G and temporarily delayed it around many airports even as they began offering the service in many U.S. cities on Jan. 19.

Since the dispute came to a head earlier this month, the FAA has cleared most types of airline planes—90% of the U.S. fleet—to operate around 5G signals, saying that their height-measuring devices, called radio altimeters, are safe from radio interference.

Dire predictions of thousands of canceled flights [did not come true](#), but [dozens of flights](#) have been grounded by 5G concerns, including U.S.-bound international flights last week and some domestic flights this week at Paine Field near Seattle. Some small airline planes, notably a group of Embraer regional jets, have not been cleared.

"It's too early to declare victory," Faye Malarkey Black, president of the Regional Airline Association, said earlier this week. "This is not fixed. We're not fixed."

Regional airlines—smaller companies that operate flights under contract with large airlines—faced limitations on a large chunk of their fleets during poor weather, Black said.

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