



DOGE

# Hundreds of FAA employees are let go as Trump's mass layoffs continue

Nearly 300 Federal Aviation Administration employees were fired just weeks after a midair collision over Washington, D.C., killed 67 people.

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/ Updated

By Aaron Gilchrist and Natasha Korecki

The Trump administration fired hundreds of employees with the Federal Aviation Administration over the weekend, just weeks after a fatal crash over Washington, D.C., exposed understaffing at the agency.

The union representing the employees called the firings a “hastily made decision” that would increase the workload of a workforce already stretched thin. The union statement referred to the Washington crash as well as two others in recent weeks across the country as evidence that it was not the time to cut personnel at the agency.

“This decision did not consider the staffing needs of the FAA, which is already challenged by understaffing,” David Spero, the national president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO, said in a statement. “Staffing decisions should be based on an individual agency’s mission-critical needs. To do otherwise is dangerous when it comes to public safety. And it is especially unconscionable in the aftermath of three deadly aircraft accidents in the past month.”

***We’re looking to hear from federal government workers. If you’re willing to talk with us, please email us at [tips@nbcuni.com](mailto:tips@nbcuni.com) or contact us through one of these methods.***

A union spokesperson said that close to 300 of its members received termination notices over the weekend and that those affected worked as maintenance mechanics, aeronautical information specialists, environmental protection specialists, aviation safety assistants and management and program assistants.

President Donald Trump tapped the world’s richest man, Elon Musk, to lead the Department of Government Efficiency, an advisory commission that is targeting government agencies for massive layoffs.

The same FAA that now faces layoffs also regulates Musk’s company SpaceX. The FAA last year proposed civil penalties against SpaceX over allegations of licensing and safety violations, after which Musk threatened to sue it. The FAA oversight of Musk’s company has serious implications. In mid-January, for example, a SpaceX rocket explosion affected dozens of flights, prompting detours and sending debris into the Caribbean. The FAA ordered SpaceX to conduct a “mishap investigation.”

FAA officials have in recent years warned that the agency was understaffed and that employees were operating in a system that was already overstressed.

The National Transportation Safety Board is still investigating the cause of the Jan. 29 collision over Washington, which killed everyone aboard a commercial American Airlines flight and an Army helicopter. In all, 67 people died. It was the deadliest U.S. air

crash in nearly 25 years.

"The flying public needs answers. How many FAA personnel were just fired? What positions? And why?" former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg asked on social media Monday.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy responded Monday night in a post to X that "the FAA alone has a staggering 45,000 employees. Less than 400 were let go, and they were all probationary, meaning they had been hired less than a year ago. Zero air traffic controllers and critical safety personnel were let go.


Duffy went on to claim that Buttigieg used the department as "a slush fund" for environmental initiatives, adding, "When we finally get a full accounting of his mismanagement, I look forward to hearing from him."

A Transportation Department spokesperson said that the FAA continued to hire and onboard air traffic controllers and safety professionals, including mechanics and others who support them, and that agency has retained employees who perform safety-critical functions.

The spokesperson did not provide any more specifics, nor did that person respond to questions about the full number of firings over the weekend and the positions that those employees held.

Following an accident in Toronto on Monday afternoon, in which a Delta Air Lines jet crash landed and overturned, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., blasted the layoffs at the FAA.

"I'm thankful that everyone in the flight incident in Toronto that took off from Minneapolis is safe, but we keep seeing these incidents day after day," Schumer wrote on X.

"Meanwhile, Trump's doing massive layoffs at the FAA — including safety specialists — and making our skies less and less safe," he added. 



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