

Flight delays: Furloughs Begin At Airports Sunday

BY JOAN LOWY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The public should expect flight delays as furloughs kick in Sunday for air traffic controllers, although the effects may be felt unevenly from airport to airport, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration said Thursday.

Without the controller furloughs, FAA officials could find no way to cut \$637 million from the agency's budget as required by automatic, across-the-board spending cuts approved by Congress, said Michael Huerta, the agency's administrator. The FAA has estimated there could be flight delays of about 90 minutes during peak periods.

Likewise, the agency sees no way around closing 149 air traffic control towers at small airports that are currently operated under contract for the FAA, Huerta told the Senate Appropriations

Committee's transportation subcommittee. The tower closings have been delayed until June 15.

The furloughs and tower closings were designed "to minimize impacts on the maximum number of travelers," he said. But he acknowledged, "We're forced to choose between very unattractive options."

A key Republican lawmaker accused the White House of deliberately trying to upset the public.

"They want to cause the most pain to the American people out there so they will put pressure on Congress to back away from sequestration (spending cuts)," Rep. Bill Shuster of Pennsylvania told a transportation gathering hosted by the National Journal news magazine. Shuster chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

"I believe he (President Barack Obama) is instructing his agencies to do things that inflict the most pain on the

most people. This should be laid right at the president's feet," Shuster said.

The FAA's 47,000 employees — including nearly 15,000 controllers — are scheduled for one furlough day every other week through Sept. 30. That will reduce the number of controller hours on duty and pay by 10 percent, Huerta said.

In order to maintain safety with fewer controllers, takeoffs and landings will have to be less frequent, and planes will have to be spaced farther apart when they are in the air, he said. That reduces the efficiency of the air traffic system, creating delays, he said.

The impacts may differ depending upon the airport, Huerta said. At Chicago's busy O'Hare International Airport, for example, it's possible there won't be a full complement of controllers to staff the airport's two control towers, requiring one tower to be shut down. Without a second tower, one of

the airport's runways will have to shut down, reducing takeoffs and landings, he said. Most airports only operate one control tower.

The employee furloughs will save an estimated \$200 million, and the tower closings will save \$25 million, Huerta said.

A spokesman for the union that represents air traffic controllers said the ramifications of the furloughs are still unclear.

"We don't know with any specificity what's going to happen until this goes down," Doug Church of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association said. "It is not a good thing for aviation to take away staffing at any level."

But air travelers may get a break on the ground. A senior Transportation Security Administration official said Thursday he doesn't expect furloughs for his agency, which staffs airport security across the nation. And, he said, longer

wait times at checkpoints have not yet materialized as a result of so-called sequestration, as Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano warned last month.

Congress included additional money for security officers in a budget bill for the remainder of the 2013 fiscal year, and long wait times have been averted for now, TSA Deputy Administrator John Halinski told a congressional panel. Obama signed the budget bill last month.

Halinski cautioned that even with the extra funding, travelers may see lines and wait times increase during busy travel periods.

Associated Press writer Richard Lardner contributed to this report.

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Haar

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ice but also provide an early celebration of Sharon's 70th birthday and the Haars' 50th wedding anniversary. The Haars will hold another celebration later this year when their daughter, Roberta Haar Duke, arrives from her home in the Netherlands.

Sharon Haar will preside over her final council meeting as mayor May 6, closing out old business before turning the gavel over to Hosek.

Haar has served more than 20 years in city government. She joined the council, serving under three different mayors, at a time when women were still relatively uncommon in South Dakota elected office. When she became mayor, she joined an elite sorority.

"I think there were four other women in the state who were mayors at the time," she said.

Sharon Haar's local roots run deep, as her ancestors were among the early white settlers of Wagner. Her great-uncle arrived

in 1896 and was a charter member of St. John's Lutheran Church in 1898. Her grandfather, who she terms "a late comer," arrived in 1906.

After high school, Sharon Haar earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of South Dakota-Springfield in 1972, teaching rural school for one year and substitute teaching in the Wagner schools for 13 years.

Sharon Haar played an active role in the family's 52-year John Deere dealership. They sold the business in 2006 to relatives in Freeman, who still owned the dealership started by his grandfather, Fred Haar, in 1882.

Despite her busy personal life, which included trips to 43 states and 33 countries, Sharon Haar served on the City Council. During her city tenure, she noted a heavy emphasis on maintaining the infrastructure, including the construction of the city lagoon about 25 years ago.

As a council member, Haar oversaw the city's landfill and received a letter from state officials that 11 regional landfills had been formed.

Haar worked with Charles Mix County commissioner Herman

Peters of Wagner to help form a four-county landfill district, so Wagner wasn't forced to haul its garbage to Winner or Vermillion. A regional landfill was eventually formed near Lake Andes.

The regional concept was also used to form a multi-county 911 located at the Charles Mix County law enforcement center in Lake Andes.

"I wasn't on the council when they formed the regional 911, but I went to a lot of information meetings on mutual aid agreements," Haar said.

She actually felt more influence as a council member than mayor, who votes only to break ties. She said she also found herself voting at least three times for things that she believed the city wanted or needed even though she felt otherwise personally.

Haar enjoyed one power of the mayor's office — she officiated at 13 marriages in 12 years. The ceremonies were held at sites ranging from the Wagner Lake gazebo and Rotary park shelter to City Hall and farms.

Haar's politics isn't limited to local government, as she has remained active in the Republican Party. She was an alternate to the 1980 GOP national convention in

Detroit and a delegate to the 1988 convention in New Orleans. Her husband attended as a delegate to the 1992 convention in Houston.

Sharon Haar was appointed twice to the state farm mediation board in the 1980s by then-governors George Mickelson and Walter Dale Miller. She remains a certified mediator by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture.

She saw firsthand the 1980s farm crisis through both her implement dealership and the state mediation board. "There were a minimum of 25 bankruptcies at the time, and more since then," she said.

As South Dakota marks the 20th anniversary of Mickelson's death in an airplane crash today (Friday), Haar holds fond memories of the late governor.

"George Mickelson always knew you when he met you on the street," she said, describing his friendliness and love for the common man and woman.

In recent years, Haar participated in two "Horizons" programs that identified poverty and other community needs.

"Affordable housing was identified as the No. 1 need," she

said. "Wagner Area Growth was started when I was on the City Council, and the housing authorities, while serving as mayor," she said.

Haar plans to remain active in the community through her volunteer work with local veterans. She formerly drove a van with patients to the Veterans Administration (VA) hospital in Sioux Falls for five years. When the new VA outreach clinic opened in Wagner three years ago, she began volunteering two hours each weekday morning in handling front office work. She still occasionally drives veterans in the van to the Sioux Falls VA hospital.

And yes, Haar plans to continue attending the annual Wagner Labor Day celebrations. She attended her first celebration at five months of age, and she said she has missed only one in her lifetime, when a grandson was born in the Netherlands.

Haar looks at the end of her council work with mixed feelings.

"When this comes to a close May 6, it will be bittersweet," she said. "I'm ready to leave office, but the council people and city employees have been so great. I want to thank them and my hus-

band, all for making me look like a good mayor."

City finance officer Becky Brunsing, who began her work in 2002, has served alongside Haar during nearly her entire time as mayor. Haar brings tremendous insight into Wagner and its residents, Brunsing said.

"Just the knowledge that Sharon has of the history of Wagner, both the city and rural area, (is invaluable)," Brunsing said. "I was born and raised here, left for 15 years and came back. I remember a lot of names, but not like Sharon does. And she remains committed to the area. The VA is a good example of her public service. She really enjoys doing it."

Haar's presence will be missed at City Hall, Brunsing said.

"Sharon stops by the office and keeps everything in check and balance, but she doesn't micromanage," the city finance officer said. "Sharon just knows what needs to be done."

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Bombing

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The break in the investigation came just days after the attack that tore off limbs, shattered windows and raised the specter of another terrorist attack on U.S. soil. FBI photo-analysis specialists have been analyzing a mountain of surveillance footage and amateur pictures and video for clues to who carried out the attack and why.

Generally, law enforcement agencies release photos of suspects only as a last resort, when they need the public's help in identifying or capturing someone.

Releasing photos can be a mixed bag: It can tip off a suspect and deny police the element of surprise. It can also trigger an avalanche of tips, forcing police to waste valuable time chasing them down.

Within moments of the an-

nouncement, the FBI website crashed, perhaps because of a crush of visitors.

In the images, both men appear to be wearing dark jackets. Suspect 1 appears to be wearing a backpack. The planting of the backpack is not depicted in the video footage that was made public.

The FBI made no mention of the men's height, weight or age range and would not discuss the men's ethnicity.

"It would be inappropriate to comment on the ethnicity of the men because it could lead people down the wrong path potentially," said FBI agent Greg Com-covich, a spokesman for the Boston FBI office.

The information on the first suspect was developed within a day or so before its release, DesLauriers said. Agent Daniel Curtin said the FBI did not issue the photos earlier because authorities wanted to be meticulous: "It's important to get it right."

At the Cathedral of the Holy Cross earlier in the day, Obama

declared to the people of Boston: "Your resolve is the greatest rebuke to whoever committed this heinous act." He spoke in almost mocking terms of those who commit such violence.

"We finish the race, and we do that because of who we are," the president said to applause. "And that's what the perpetrators of such senseless violence — these small, stunted individuals who would destroy instead of build and think somehow that makes them important — that's what they don't understand."

"We will find you," he warned those behind the attack.

Seven victims remained in critical condition. Killed were 8-year-old Martin Richard of Boston, 29-year-old restaurant manager Krystle Campbell of Medford, Mass., and Lu Lingzi, a 23-year-old Boston University graduate student from China.

Video and photos recovered in the investigation are being examined and enhanced by an FBI unit called the Operational Technologies Division, said Joe DiZinno, former director of the

FBI lab in Quantico, Va.

Investigators are looking at video frame by frame — a laborious process, though one aided by far more sophisticated facial recognition technology than is commercially available, forensic specialists said.

"When you have something that is this high-profile, they are going to use every available resource that they have," said former Miami federal prosecutor Melissa Damian Visconti.

The investigation will probably collect about a million hours of videotape from fixed security cameras and cellphones and cameras used by spectators, said Gene Grindstaff, a scientist at In-tergraph Corp., a Huntsville, Ala., company that makes video analysis software used by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies.

But after years of investigating terrorist incidents and other crimes, the FBI is practiced at cataloging, categorizing and analyzing such evidence and will winnow it down dramatically, he said.

"Back in the days of 20 years

ago, you were lucky if you had video and it was probably of poor quality and it took a tremendous amount of enhancement. Today you have a completely different issue," Grindstaff said.

Investigators can set the video analysis software so that it automatically searches for certain types of objects or people matching a height and weight description. The software can also spot patterns that analysts might not notice, such as a certain car that turns up in different places, Grindstaff said.

DiZinno, who ran the FBI lab from 2007 to 2010, said any retrieved bomb components such as the pressure cookers, shrapnel and pieces of timers or wire will be closely examined for fingerprints, DNA, hairs and fibers.

The bomb components would be traced by figuring out the item's maker, where each piece is typically purchased and whether the device resembles any bombs the FBI has seen in past attacks. The FBI lab keeps a detailed file on past bombings, including many overseas attacks.

"Let's say there was a timer," DiZinno said. "Was there a serial number? Who was the manufacturer? That can provide leads for investigators."

One pressure cooker maker, the Fagor Group in Spain, said that it has been contacted by U.S. investigators and that company officials are extending full cooperation. The company sells 250,000 pressure cookers a year in the U.S. and 1 million worldwide.

Storm

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Hundreds of people are working to clear trees and branches over an area spanning more than 70 square miles.

"As we continue to find the best way to do this operation, we are also backing that up with the right amount of personnel and equipment," Public Works Director Mark Cotter told the *Argus Leader* newspaper.

However, some city and state crews were taken off the streets Wednesday to prepare for snow removal Thursday, Cotter said.

In western North Dakota on Wednesday, slick conditions on state Highway 22 in Dunn County led to a series of vehicle crashes involving 13 people. There were no serious injuries, but it took crews three hours to clear the area, Highway Patrol Sgt. Dan Haugen told *The Dickinson Press*.

"People were driving too fast for the conditions," Haugen said. "They weren't leaving enough space between other vehicles, and these crashes could have been preventable with some more defensive driving."

Numerous crashes also were reported in southeastern North Dakota early Thursday, according to KFGO radio in Fargo.

The recent snowfall has increased fears of flooding in the Fargo area. Officials on Thursday reopened Sandbag Central, where volunteers are filling sandbags to hold back the expected floodwaters.

The city wants an additional 500,000 sandbags, to go with the 1 million bags that were made in early April and 300,000 bags left over from the 2011 flood. City officials originally were planning for a 38-foot Red River crest, which is 20 feet above flood stage. That has now been bumped to 41 feet.

The western South Dakota city of Rapid City also has seen above-normal precipitation recently, with record amounts of snow on both April 9 and on Tuesday. However, heavy amounts of snow forecast for Wednesday didn't materialize, leading some parents to criticize school officials for calling off classes for the day.

The decision was influenced by a winter storm warning for the area, Superintendent Tim Mitchell told the *Rapid City Journal*.

"Last week the weatherman was right, and this week the weatherman was wrong," he said. "Certainly in hindsight you think back and we potentially could have had school, but when I was on my way to school this morning the roads were very icy and if someone had an accident it would have been bad."

Drought

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A half-inch to .75 inch of rain is predicted for this area in the next week.

Also, the Hydrologic Information Center predicts a minor risk for spring flooding along the James River in this area.

The late snows have slowed farmers' efforts to get into fields, it was noted.

Only 2 percent of the nation's

corn crop has been planted, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Additionally, Nebraska farmers have 51 percent of the state's oat crop planted, while that number is only 24 percent in South Dakota.

While the moisture has helped reduce fire risks, it could have a reverse effect should conditions become drier in the summer. The vegetation helped by the precipitation could become fuel for fires in dry conditions.

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