

Opinion: FAA's problems run deeper than sleeping controllers

Publisher's note: This editorial is from the April 13, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.

The Federal Aviation Administration has a problem.

It's not simply that a controller fell asleep in the tower at Reno-Tahoe International Airport early Wednesday as a medical flight was attempting to land, as troubling as that is.

One incident of that nature can be excused as the action – or inaction – of a poor employee. It might even be possible to ignore a second incident as nothing more than a coincidence.

But Wednesday's failure of a controller in Reno to respond to a pilot's calls – as well as those of concerned airport officials – is the fifth time since the beginning of the year that there has been a serious lapse in an airport control tower and the fourth involving a sleeping controller.

That's not happenstance. That's a sign of a troubled agency whose employees and managers must be held accountable.

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