



# T-SAP SAFE Discussion Sheet

Risk of Working on Operational ATC Positions

February 2026

## Safety Issue

The Technical Operations Safety Action Program (T-SAP) has received multiple reports where maintenance or testing was performed on operational ATC

Positions while system redundancy was degraded. Routine actions—removing panels, promoting channels, restoring processors, or loading software—contributed to loss or reduction of ATC service.

### KEY THEMES

#### DEGRADED STATES BEFORE WORK BEGAN

Failed or “greyed out” processors, open trouble tickets, and incomplete backups left little margin for error once work started.

#### HUMAN-MACHINE INTERFACE ISSUES

Subtle, low-contrast indications and confusing dialog boxes made it hard to see failed equipment or understand why recovery commands were not accepted.

#### WORKLOAD & PROCEDURE GAPS

High mid-shift workload, distractions, and added responsibilities increased the chance of missed indications, while technicians sometimes relied on informal workarounds when system behavior didn’t match documented procedures.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Working on an operational ATC position, especially when redundancy is already degraded, can quickly escalate to loss of service or ATC ZERO. **Before starting, verify backup capability, understand current system issues, and stop to seek assistance whenever the system behaves unexpectedly.**

### EXCERPTS FROM T-SAP REPORTS

“ Because of the serious nature of the situation the OMIC declared ATC ZERO.

This is difficult to discern even when looking for it. The failed processor is a dark gray outline with dark gray identifying text ”



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### DISCUSSION



Have you ever seen a dialog box or system message that was confusing or unclear? How did you respond, and what should we do when that happens?



How should we coordinate with Air Traffic and supervisors before and during work on operational positions to ensure everyone understands the risk and current system state?



What kinds of events or near misses should always be reported to T-SAP, and how can sharing these experiences help prevent a larger incident in the future?