

FAA Whistleblower Alleges Employer Retaliation

Whistleblower Anne Whiteman has filed a claim against the Federal Aviation Authority, alleging that she was discriminated against after reporting that the agency was hiding safety violations at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport.

Whiteman works as an air traffic control specialist at DFW Airport, and has been an employee for more than 25 years.

In 1998, 2004 and 2007, she spoke openly about agency managers misclassifying safety problems at eight times the national average. These problems include instances where planes were allowed to fly closer to each other than what is standard. The errors were attributed to pilots in an attempt to shift blame away from air traffic controllers.

In a statement issued Monday, Whiteman said, "I had the best interest of the public at heart for the past 10 years when reporting these serious safety concerns. I just could not turn a blind eye to the FAA's continual failure to correct the problems."

A federal agency that protects whistle-blowers, backed up Whiteman's complaints, saying the problem of falsely classifying incidents when aircraft got too close to each other was eight times greater at DFW than at other airports nationwide.

The inspector general recommended that seven FAA managers at DFW Airport be removed, and last week an FAA spokeswoman said that had been done.

After her disclosure, Whiteman said that she faced a series of personnel actions and acts of retaliation.

She was removed from her position in the radar room, where safety concerns can be witnessed firsthand.

This is considered a demotion within the industry. Whiteman also said that she has been denied job advancement, and her benefits have been hindered.

"I feel that, as a result of aiding public safety, I've had my career seriously damaged," Whiteman said. "I only did what I felt was right – people were going to die."

On top of these professional allegations, Whiteman said that she has become the target of harassment from supervisors, including physical assault and attempts to run her off the road.

As a result of this harassment, Whiteman said, she has developed stress-induced stomach ulcers and a jaw disorder.