

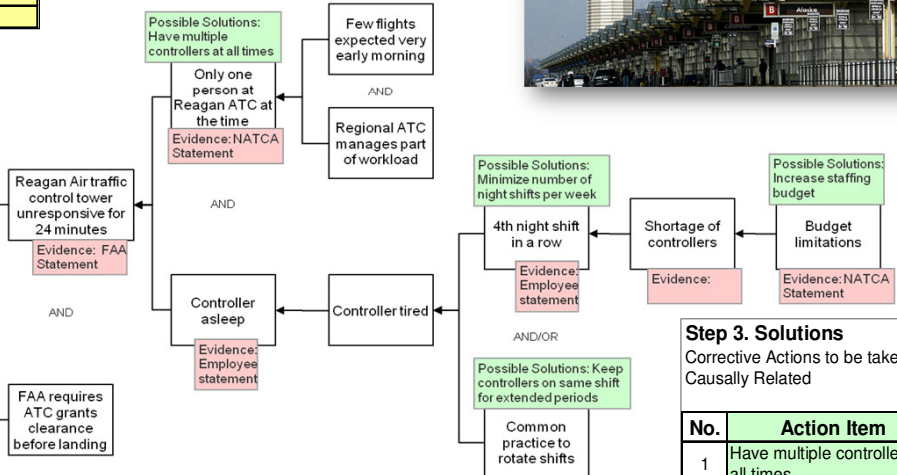
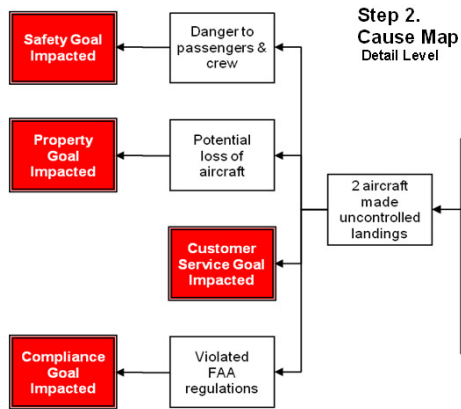
Air Traffic Controller Asleep
Reagan National Airport

At least three times over the past decade, air traffic controller fatigue has been investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in near-miss airline accidents. Again last week, controller fatigue was in the news when two early-morning aircraft had uncontrolled landings at Reagan National Airport near Washington D.C. The relieved controller stated that he had worked the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift four nights in a row.

Faced with harsh criticism over the latest incident, the FAA reacted by mandating a second controller at Reagan National Airport and reviewing traffic management policies at all single-person towers. Regional radar controllers are now required to check in with single-person towers during night shifts to ensure controllers are prepared to handle incoming traffic.



Step 1. Define the Problem		
What	Problem(s)	2 planes made uncontrolled landings at Reagan National Airport; Air Traffic Control (ATC) controller unresponsive
When	Date	Wednesday, March 23, 2011
	Time	12:10 a.m.
	Different, unusual, unique	Early morning
Where	State, city	Washington D.C.
	Facility, site	Air Traffic Control tower at Reagan National Airport
	Task being performed	Landing passenger aircraft
Impact to the Goals		
	Safety	Danger to passengers & crew
	Property	Potential loss of aircraft
	Compliance	Violated FAA regulations
	Cust. Service	2 aircraft made uncontrolled landings

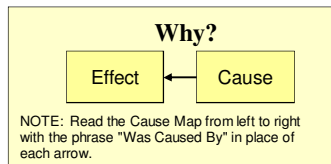


Step 3. Solutions
Corrective Actions to be taken from this Incident that are Causally Related

No.	Action Item	Cause
1	Have multiple controllers at all times	Only one person at Reagan ATC at the time
2	Minimize number of night shifts per week	4th night shift in a row
3	Keep controllers on same shift for extended periods	Common practice to rotate shifts
4	Increase staffing budget	Budget limitations



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The associated Cause Map reflects the multiple solutions suggested, and even implemented, to combat the problem of controller fatigue. As discussed, the FAA, NTSB and NATCA have pursued multiple paths to overcome the issue of controller fatigue. However, as the Cause Map shows, there are *multiple* contributing factors in this case. Controller fatigue isn't the only reason those planes had an uncontrolled landing, and controller fatigue wasn't caused by just four night shifts in a row. Because there are multiple reasons why this happened, it also means there are multiple opportunities to correct future problems. The key isn't eliminating all of the causes, but rather eliminating the right one.