



Safety Information Bulletin

Aerodromes

SIB No.: 2020-07R2

Issued: 27 January 2021

Subject: Progressive Restart of Aerodrome Operations after Complete or Partial Closure

Note: This SIB is issued in the context of the return to normal operations (RNO) project with the aim to provide guidance on aerodrome operations following complete closure, downsizing or progressively increasing operations from minimal traffic.

Revision:

This SIB revises EASA SIB 2020-07R1 dated 17 July 2020.

Ref. Publications:

Commission Regulation (EU) [No 139/2014](#) dated 12 February 2014.

Applicability:

Competent authorities, aerodrome operators and air navigation service providers.

Description:

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and due to the limitations imposed by individual States, most flights have been suspended. As of June 2020, following the resumption of flight operations, aerodromes started to operate again, however with reduced number of flights and staff. This new situation was a significant change for many aerodromes, which required an adaptation of their operational practices in order to anticipate the new situation.

For this reason, the aerodrome operators should have in place a robust change management process under their safety management system, in order to cope with the new situation and to ensure that operations are conducted in a safe manner.

At this time, the safety concern described in this SIB is not considered to be an unsafe condition that would warrant Safety Directive (SD) action under Regulation (EU) [139/2014](#), Annex II, ADR.AR.A.040.

Recommendation(s):

The following recommendations aim to support the safe operation of aircraft at an aerodrome and should be considered along with any other instructions related to health and security issues, as well as the provision of ground handling services.

Aerodrome operators are responsible for ensuring the safety of operations at the aerodromes. This should be done in close cooperation and coordination with the air navigation service providers, air operators and ground handling service providers under the oversight of the

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competent authorities, taking into consideration also the instructions of the public health authorities.

Aerodrome operators should adjust their operations plan to support flight operations which should include at least the following:

1. Overall inspection of the paved and unpaved surfaces, paying attention to:
 - a. General cleanliness, presence of foreign object debris (FOD) and any signs of damage to the pavement surface which could pose a risk to the aircraft operations;
 - b. Leakages and depressions due to long-term parked aircraft;
 - c. Vegetation that might grow more quickly due to decreased use of the movement area, causing reduced visibility of signs and markings, or disturbances of non-visual aids;
 - d. Drainage systems and storm water collection systems, in order to ensure that they are unobstructed.
2. Electrical power supply systems:
 - a. The status of the primary and secondary power supply systems, including their control and monitoring systems, in particular those supporting the approach, runway and taxiway lighting, apron floodlighting, visual docking guidance systems, non-visual aids, Meteorology (MET) equipment, Air Traffic Services (ATS) installations (e.g. the air traffic control tower or aerodrome flight information services unit), rescue and firefighting station and every alerting and communication system should be checked;
 - b. The established maintenance programme should be followed.
3. Non-visual aids for navigation check:
 - a. The status of non-visual aids for navigation, especially of those which have not been in use for longer period;
 - b. The issuance of a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) downgrading the status of the non-visual aids if scheduled flight checks have not been conducted;
 - c. Aircraft parked on taxiways do not infringe the critical and sensitive areas of non-visual aids;
 - d. The condition and height of grass and other vegetation around the non-visual aids.
4. Visual aids for navigation check:
 - a. The status of all lights, markings and signs, particularly when frequency of inspections has been reduced. Inspection reports should be reviewed following the completion of the inspections, and open items should be closed as soon as possible;
 - b. Lights, signs and markings are not obstructed by vegetation;
 - c. When the regular checks and the calibration of Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI) have not been conducted according to the schedule, a new calibration should be arranged;
 - d. Any temporary markings and signs which have been installed on runways, taxiways and aprons to accommodate overflow parking of aircraft should be removed prior to their use;
 - e. The status of the obstacle lights at the aerodrome should be checked and failed lights should be replaced.

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5. Rescue and firefighting:

- a. The status of rescue and firefighting equipment and vehicles should be checked regularly;
- b. Availability of extinguishing agents appropriate to the rescue and firefighting level of protection should be ensured;
- c. The maintenance of rescue and firefighting vehicles should be conducted according to the maintenance programme. Any scheduled maintenance that has not been performed should be completed as soon as possible;
- d. Communication and alerting systems should be checked regularly for proper functioning;
- e. The status of the emergency access roads to the active runway(s) should be checked and special attention should be given to ensure that they have unobstructed access, particularly from parked aircraft;
- f. Staffing levels should be appropriate to the rescue and firefighting level of protection available. The rescue and firefighting level of protection should be adjusted to the most demanding aircraft in terms of rescue and firefighting aerodrome category. In this case, the information should be promulgated via NOTAM, if different from the published aerodrome category.

6. Obstacle management:

- a. The obstacles in the aerodrome's surrounding should be reviewed. The check should focus on the lighting and marking of the authorized obstacles as well as the emergence of new structures. Any unauthorized obstacles should be managed and as appropriate brought to the attention of the competent authorities of the Member State without delay;
- b. Obstacle Free Zone(s), when established, should be thoroughly examined, especially when aircraft are parked on taxiways close to runways;
- c. Obstacle protection surfaces of visual approach slope indicator systems (VASIS/PAPI) should be checked for possible infringements, particularly from parked aircraft;
- d. ATS line of sight should be unobstructed, especially for the active runway(s) and taxiway(s) which are used for aircraft taxiing.

7. Wildlife hazard management:

- a. An increase in the frequency of inspections for wildlife presence should be considered and the status of wildlife activity reporting should be checked. The latest available reports should be reviewed, updated and special focus should be given to areas which are known for wildlife activity;
- b. The status of vegetation, habitat and land use management at the aerodrome should be regularly checked
- c. In the case of increased bird activity at and around the aerodrome, a NOTAM should be issued to advise caution;
- d. The status of the aerodrome fences should be checked regularly. Fences should be repaired, when necessary;
- e. Availability and functioning of repellent systems should be checked;

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- f. Aircraft, aerodrome equipment and infrastructure, such as passenger boarding bridges, should be checked for possible nesting due to inactivity. Inform aircraft operators when wildlife activities are observed close to parked aircraft;
 - g. Special focus should be given to new wildlife species, which have not yet adapted to aviation activities;
8. Apron management:
- a. The effective functioning of passenger boarding bridges, visual docking guidance systems, if applicable, and FOD management should be checked;
 - b. Depending on the size of the aerodrome and the expected traffic, a list of available aircraft stands, and a stand allocation plan should be prepared. The plan should be communicated to the ATS and provider of apron management service, if applicable, as well as to ground handling service providers.
9. Aeronautical information management:
- a. Any NOTAMs/publications in regard to restrictions to aircraft operations or closure (partial or full) of the aerodrome should be reviewed and, if required, should be amended or cancelled;
 - b. Any new restrictions, non-availability of infrastructure, services such as provision of ground handling services, fuel, de/anti-icing, obstacles and new procedures that may have an impact on flight operations should be published via NOTAM without delay.
10. Aerodrome emergency plan:
- a. Equipment and facilities required for emergencies are available and functioning;
 - b. Participating organisations are available and capable to support in case of emergency;
 - c. Table top emergency exercises should be conducted in case if during the lockdown period partial or full scale emergency exercises have been postponed. However, the aerodrome operator should also conduct the planned emergency exercises as soon as possible following coordination with the competent authority and selecting a scenario compliant with applicable physical distancing measures;
 - d. Consideration should be given to emergency scenarios involving less persons due to applicable social distancing measures, e.g. using a cargo aircraft rather than a full passenger aircraft, which would still allow simulation of an emergency situation involving all internal and external stakeholders during the different phases of the emergency exercise.
11. Airside works:
- a. Work plans should be reviewed and revised accordingly and communicated to the contractors and aerodrome personnel;
 - b. Construction or maintenance work sites are appropriately marked and lighted; safety measures should be communicated to contractors and aerodrome personnel. Special attention should be given when works are executed close to active runways;
 - c. For ongoing changes or when resuming construction works, it should be ensured that hypothesis and mitigating measures are still relevant and implemented;
 - d. NOTAMs, Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) Supplements and amendments related to airside works should be validated and updated if necessary;

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- e. Additional attention should be given to human factor principles. The lower number of movements might lead to lower attention to dangerous situations from workers (e.g. with regards to runway incursions).
12. Vehicle/equipment readiness:
- a. All the vehicles and equipment operating on the movement area, especially those which have not been used for an extensive period, should be maintained and functioning properly;
 - b. Communication systems should be checked for proper functioning.
13. Disabled aircraft removal plan:
- a. The information published in the AIP should be reviewed and updated as necessary;
 - b. The disabled aircraft removal plan, the availability of equipment, personnel and any other arrangements should be reviewed, especially in case some of contracted activities.
14. Availability and competence of personnel:
- a. Especially where staff has been downsized, a sufficient number of qualified and trained personnel for the planned tasks and activities should be ensured;
 - b. Staff should be advised to always respect local rules for social distancing in the changing and social rooms. The safe distance to others should be adhered to also during off-duty periods, so as not to endanger themselves and other staff, and potentially setting off a spreading event that could affect the availability of personnel. (Refer also to: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/community/content/wellbeing>).
 - c. Training records should be reviewed and, if necessary, refresher trainings should be conducted, especially if staff returns following long absences. E-learning training courses may be used to facilitate theoretical training and physical distancing;
 - d. Personnel should be briefed on the new or changed procedures;
 - e. Personnel should be briefed on possible changes to the infrastructure that have taken place during the lockdown period to allow them to familiarize themselves with the new working environment.
15. Coordination and collaboration:
- a. Stakeholder preparedness:
 - i. The availability of staff and appropriately maintained equipment should be ensured by the ground handling service providers;
 - ii. Specific procedures should be communicated in advance and a coordination team should be established to address issues that may emerge;
 - iii. It should be ensured that fuel suppliers have adequately trained staff and equipment to refuel the aircraft and that hydrant systems and fuel bowsers have been checked to mitigate the risk of fuel contamination.
 - b. ATS and MET:
 - i. Coordination should be performed with ATS to ensure the readiness of aerodrome for return to operations and agree upon any operational restrictions;
 - ii. Coordination should be performed with local MET office to ensure the availability of meteorological services.

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16. Low visibility procedures (LVP):
 - a. Review the approved LVP, including the coordination with ATS and, if applicable, apron management unit;
 - b. Check the functioning of all system and equipment supporting LVP;
 - c. If LVP cannot be implemented, promulgate the information through NOTAM and/or Automatic Terminal Information Service.

17. Operations in winter conditions:
 - a. The snow plan should be reviewed and it should be made available to all organisations involved;
 - b. Surface conditions should be assessed and reported to the aerodrome users in accordance with the applicable rules.

18. Management system, paying attention to:
 - a. Revision of the hazard log and performance of a hazard identification to determine potential new hazards following lockdown;
 - b. Revision of existing safety risk assessments;
 - c. Assessment of impact on safety standards in case of financial difficulties;
 - d. Assessment, under the change management process, of the continuously changing situations (operations, traffic volume, deterioration of the financial situation and focus on financial management, personnel on short work/unemployment, difficult financial situation of organisations providing contracted activities) and implementation of mitigating measures;
 - e. Monitoring of staff performance which may be degraded due to demotivation, lower safety awareness and lower attention due to decreased traffic;
 - f. Compliance monitoring with a focus on contracted activities to monitor the readiness and performance of contractors.

Competent authorities should monitor the effective implementation of the plan to progressively restart operations.

Contact(s):

For further information contact the EASA Aerodromes Standards & Implementation Section, Flight Standards Directorate, E-mail: aerodromes@easa.europa.eu.

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