

ADVISORY CAUTIONARY NON-DIRECTIVE

AIRPORT SAFETY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION AAS-300

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TO: Airport Operators, FAA Airport Certification Safety Inspectors

TOPIC: Closing active runway for FOD checks increases safe operations

In today's fast paced operational environment, airport personnel and air traffic controllers face the daunting challenge of meeting capacity demands while optimizing safety. As a result, any safety deficiency that reduces runway capacity must be resolved quickly and in a positive manner.

The FAA's Office of Safety and Standards has been made aware of instances where some airports have failed to take immediate and positive action following a report of FOD (on or near the runway) from flight crews. In one instance, operations on an active runway continued for several minutes following a report of loose aggregate material (of a size that posed a threat to aircraft operations) on the runway. Stressful situations have added fuel to this debate by fostering opportunities where a controller or pilot reports FOD but operations are continued until someone arrives to clear the debris from the runway. While the temptation to continue operations on a contaminated surface may be strong, particularly during periods of increased traffic movement, airports must never lose sight of the primary goal, which first and foremost is safety of flight.

In an effort to avoid damage to aircraft, airports are reminded of their obligation to maintain safe movement areas throughout their facilities. This should include procedures for affecting immediate runway closures in the presence of certain types of FOD, such as large pieces of metal, large aggregate, large concrete spalling pieces, or any other materials likely to pose a high risk for operators. While the FAA recognizes that not all types of FOD will necessitate an immediate runway closure, quick and decisive action should be taken, in all cases, to assess the threat posed by the FOD in question. A failure to take appropriate action could result in costly aircraft damage or even a loss of life.

The FAA recommends that airports work closely with their ATC facilities in establishing procedures for handling such manners. This should include, but may not be limited to, FOD threat assessment procedures and triggers for closure (if

necessary), surface area operations by airport personnel involved in repairs, surface movement and air traffic procedures during closures, and reopening procedures.

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