

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 2, 1977

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-77-36 and 37

Recently, several aircraft accidents have occurred at DuPage County Airport, Illinois, shortly after 2200:00, the nightly closing time for the air traffic control tower.

On July 29, 1975, N21855, a Cessna 172, was in the traffic pattern at DuPage County Airport for practice landings on runway 15 when the tower closed. At 2200:30 the pilot called Chicago Flight Service Station and advised, "Eight five five was touch and go on one five...." Another pilot in the area saw the airplane crash shortly thereafter, and he advised the flight service station of the accident at 2201:05. The reported surface visibility was 10 miles.

On May 31, 1976, N174YC, a Beechcraft BE-18, was cleared for a straight-in localizer approach to runway 10 at DuPage County Airport. The pilot communicated with DuPage tower at 2154:25. Because of a problem with his directional gyros, the pilot made a missed approach and was switched over to Chicago Air Route Traffic Control Center (Chicago Center) for another approach. When N174YC was cleared for a second approach at 2206:55, the tower was closed. The airplane crashed at 2217:00; the reported surface visibility was 1 mile with fog.

On March 3, 1977, N1947Y, a Mooney MU20E, was cleared for a straight-in instrument landing system (ILS) approach to runway 10 by DuPage tower about 2151:00. Because the pilot had problems receiving the glide slope signal, he made a missed approach; N1947Y was vectored back to the localizer course by Chicago Center. Chicago Center cleared N1947Y for another straight-in ILS approach to runway 10 at 2206:05 (after the DuPage tower had closed). At 2214:20, N1947Y called Chicago Center

and advised the controller of another missed approach. The airplane crashed about three-quarters of a mile southwest of the airport; reported surface visibility was one-half mile with rain and fog.

The DuPage County Airport air traffic control tower operates daily from 0600:00 until 2200:00. By letter of agreement between the tower and DuPage County airport management, when the control tower is not in operation, the runway lights for runways 15/33 and 10/28 are turned on dim, or 10 percent, when the visibility is 4 miles or more and on 30 percent when the visibility is less than 4 miles. The nonstandard runway alignment indicator lights (RAILS) and the runway end identifier lights (REILS) are turned off. DuPage tower controllers are required to adhere to these procedures. After the tower is closed, the light systems cannot be controlled by Chicago Flight Service Station or by a pilot.

Tower controllers must advise all pilots who cannot complete their operation into DuPage County Airport by 2200:00 that the tower will be closing.

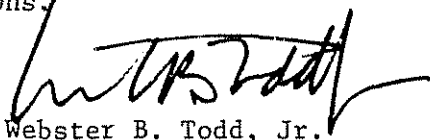
Although the operating hours for the RAILS and REILS are published in Part 3 of the Airman's Information Manual and on the applicable Jeppesen approach charts, the Safety Board does not believe that this operation is in the best interest of public safety. We believe that a pilot who is approaching the airport for landing in marginal meteorological conditions -- especially one who has reported navigational problems -- should have the advantage of all available airport light systems and components. Since Chicago Flight Service Station operates continuously and provides flight assistance and communications services for DuPage County Airport, we believe that the flight service station should control the airport lights after the tower closes.

Based on the above, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Delegate control of all DuPage County Airport, Illinois, light systems and components to the Chicago Flight Service Station when the DuPage control tower is not operational. (Class II - Priority Followup) (A-77-36)

Survey all airports with published instrument approach procedures and with control towers which do not operate continuously to assure that the airport lights can be controlled by another Federal Aviation Administration facility or by a pilot when the control tower is not operational. (Class II - Priority Followup) (A-77-37)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman