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**Federal Aviation
Administration**

InFO

Information for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

Subject: Runway Lights Required For Night Takeoffs in Part 121

Purpose: This InFO reminds pilots operating under 14 CFR part 121 that runway lights are required for takeoff at night, and that checking pertinent Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) and doing some extra headwork are essential in making a “go/no go” takeoff decision.

Background: Recently the crew of a commercial jet attempted a takeoff at night on the wrong runway at Lexington, Kentucky, resulting in a fatal accident. That runway’s lights were inoperative.

Discussion: Runway lighting varies among airports and among runways, but there are three key points that every pilot must understand when operating under part 121.

1. No Runway Lights, No Takeoff at Night. Most pilots flying to U.S. airports under part 121 are restricted to airports certificated under 14 CFR part 139. A part 139 airport is required to maintain lighting systems authorized by the Administrator, including runway lighting, for air carrier operations. See part 121, § 121.590 for more. (§ part 125, 125.49 and part 135, § 135.229 also specify runway lighting requirements for takeoff.)

2. Checking Pertinent NOTAMS Is a Must. An airport authority is required to issue NOTAMs, and a certificate holder operating under part 121 must make NOTAMs available to its pilots. Pilots must check NOTAMs for runway light outages and taxiway/runway closures. *Takeoff is not permitted on a closed runway.*

3. A Pilot Must Think Beyond the NOTAMs. Inoperative runway lights do not necessarily cause a runway to be closed by the airport authority. On the other hand, a runway may be unusable, but its runway lights may be fully operational (e.g., during plowing or during removal of a disabled airplane or vehicle). Sometimes runway lights may be partially inoperative, in which case the Go-No Go decision rests with the pilot and the aircraft dispatcher to determine that those runway lights still working are adequate for the conditions existing at the time.

Recommended action: Directors of safety, directors of operations, trainers, and pilots of air carriers operating under part 121 should collaborate to make these points clearly understood by all their crews. These points should be included in their pilots’ operating manuals and training programs, and should be applied when planning any night takeoff.