

CERTALERT

ADVISORY CAUTIONARY NON-DIRECTIVE

AIRPORT SAFETY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION AAS-300

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT MARC TONNAKLIFF, AAS-300, (202) 267-8732

DATE: 09/24/08 No. 08-11
TO: Airport Operators, FAA Airport Certification Safety Inspectors
TOPIC: NTSB Recommendations for Clear and Concise Airport Communications

PURPOSE: The purpose of this CERT ALERT is to draw attention to and emphasize the importance of clear and decisive radio communications between airport operators and pilots when conveying runway conditions directly to flight crews operating aircraft during winter weather conditions.

BACKGROUND: On April 12, 2007, Pinnacle Airlines Flight #4712 experienced an excursion off the departure end of Runway 28 after landing at Cherry Capital Airport in Traverse City, Michigan during winter weather conditions. While the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) investigation revealed the flight crew's failure to conduct a landing distance assessment as the probable cause of the accident, the airport operator's conveyance of runway conditions lacked specific and decisive phraseology to the flight crew regarding the latest surface conditions on the runway just minutes prior to landing. For more information regarding this accident, the final report is available by visiting <http://www.nts.gov/Publictn/2008/AAR0802.pdf>.

The airplane was being operated under the provisions of 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 121. The aircraft had departed from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP), Minneapolis, Minnesota, about 2153 central daylight time (CDT) in route to Cherry Capital Airport (TVC), Traverse City, Michigan. Snow removal operations were in progress and instrument meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) was closed at the time of the event and the airport was actively communicating with Minneapolis Center and directly with the flight crew on the TVC CTAF frequency.

During the last 30+ minutes of the accident flight, the TVC Airport Operations Supervisor made several radio transmissions to the pilots regarding snow removal operations, accumulation of snow on the landing runway and runway friction and braking action reports. In the final 15 minutes of the flight, intensifying snow squalls were occurring at the airport and the conditions on the runway were deteriorating rapidly. Approximately six minutes before the airplane landed, the

TVC Airport Operations Supervisor described the runway braking action as “NIL” in a radio transmission on the TVC CTAF. The Safety Board concluded that it was likely that neither pilot heard this “NIL” braking report because the transmission occurred simultaneously with critical approach instructions issued by the MSP ARTCC controller. Within minutes of Pinnacle 4712 landing, TVC Airport Operations made two separate transmissions to the flight crew with critical surface condition information.

TVC Airport Operations reported to the aircraft: “yeah I’m gonna I don’t know what the ah conditions like “down on the runway but I’m gonna call braking action NIL now cause it’s fillin in real hard.” Within two minutes of landing, TVC Airport Operations conveys to #4712, “yeah we’re all clear of the runway for ya and again ah brakin actions probably NIL on the runway.” The flight crew queries the airport: “Are you saying it’s NIL?” and Airport Operations responds: “Oh I haven’t been out there to do a field report and it’s been ah five ten minutes so I don’t know what it’s doing now.” The flight crew prepares for landing and within two minutes touches down on Runway 28 and slides off the departure end of the Runway. Fortunately, there were no injuries among the 49 passengers and crew members on board the aircraft; however damage to the aircraft was substantial.

ACTION: The Office of Airports recommends that all 14 CFR Part 139 certificated airports:

(1) Review 14 CFR Part 139.339:

Airport condition reporting. In a manner authorized by the Administrator, each certificate holder must-

(a) Provide for the collection and dissemination of airport condition information to *air carriers*.

It should be noted that in the context of this section, the term “air carrier” may not necessarily refer to the flight crew, but rather that component of the airline that has been designated to receive such communications. Some airlines do designate flight crews as recipients of surface reports or other airport information. In other cases, flight crews, by virtue of their airlines’ FAA-approved operating manual, are not permitted to communicate directly with airport ground operations personnel. Each winter operations plan should consider variations in each air carrier’s communication requirements and accommodate them as necessary. This includes training of airport personnel regarding air carrier points of contact as well as the dissemination of critical safety data. Having these procedures in place will avoid unnecessary confusion and delays in the receipt of critical safety data.

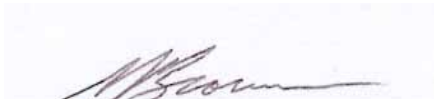
(2) Review the circumstances of this event with all staff who are involved in airfield snow removal operations. Focus of this review should include additional personnel training that reinforces proper, clear, and decisive radio phraseology when communicating airfield condition reports. Additionally, airport operators should incorporate standard operating procedures to request read backs for all information conveyed via radio to ensure the respective party received the correct transmission.

(3) Airport Operators review the NTSB Safety Recommendation report on the incident.

http://www.nts.gov/recs/letters/2008/A08_40_43.pdf

(4) Ensure as part of the ACM and Winter Operations plan, communications procedures are in place in the event the ATCT is closed. This should include designated points of contact within each airline serviced by the airport, along with procedures regarding the exchange of information between the airport, the airlines, and flight crew members. The plan should also require Operations Personnel to know and understand proper radio terminology, to know precisely who is designated to receive it, the proper format for communicating it, and to communicate it in a clear and decisive manner. Flight crews are dependent on accurate airfield condition reports prior to takeoff and landing. The type and depth of runway contaminants (wet snow / dry snow/ ice) are critical to pilots as they make their takeoff or landing distance assessments prior to their operation. Airport Operators can find guidance on winter operations reporting in AC 150/5200-30 – Airport Winter Safety and Operations & 150/5200-28 – Notices to Airmen (NOTAMS) for Airport Operators”.

If you have any questions or comments relating to this CERT ALERT, please contact the respective Airport Certification Safety Inspector assigned to your airport or Marc Tonnacliff at (202) 267-8732 or marc.tonnacliff@faa.gov.



Michael W. Brown, Manager
Airport Safety and Operations Division

September 24, 2008
Date

DISTRIBUTION

CERTALERT DISTRIBUTION LIST