

Log 784

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 18, 1978

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Forwarded to:

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

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-78-59 through -62

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On the night of July 27, 1976, N56712, a Piper PA 34-200, landed on runway 17 at Paul Windle Airport, Greensburg, Kansas, continued past the end of the runway, struck the bank of a ditch, and came to rest in an open wheat field. Two passengers were killed, and the pilot and another passenger were seriously injured.

Investigation revealed that low-intensity runway lights were installed only on the south 2,176 feet of runway 17/35, which is 2,580 feet long. At that time, however, the current issue of the Airman's Information Manual (AIM) Airport Directory contained only the following pertinent information for the airport: Runway 02/20 is the longest of two runways and is 2,800 feet long; low-intensity runway lighting; airport attended dawn to dusk and other times on call; powerlines on approach to runways 20 and 17.

A remark reflecting the correct runway lighting condition had been in the FAA Airport Master Record as early as 1965, but was not published in the AIM until after the accident in the Fall/Winter 1976/77 issue. Publication of the remark was a result of its being "flagged" on May 3, 1976, by the National Flight Data Center (NFDC). However, it did not appear in the daily National Flight Data Digest or in the AIM, Volume 3a, Special Notices, although the information did qualify for publication. We were not able to determine that new system procedures or checks had been put into effect to prevent similar oversights.

Further study disclosed that the Sectional Aeronautical Chart published by the National Ocean Survey (NOS) does not inform the pilot that the Greensburg airport runway lights are other than normal in any respect. The legend for these charts includes three symbols which indicate specific limitations of the airport lighting, and the pilot must research further to determine the details of the limitation. However,

none of these symbols could have been used to connote the particular lighting limitation at Greensburg, and no other symbology was provided to indicate a general limitation of the lighting. The Safety Board believes that a pilot would be alerted to any abnormality by substituting the current definition of the symbol (L) with a statement, such as "Lighting limited in hours of operation or capability -- for current status and details refer to the Airport/Facility Directory and NOTAM's or contact the airport manager or tie-in/associated FSS."

In March 1978, the NOS assumed responsibility for the publication of an airport/facility directory. The new publication derives information from the FAA NFDC automated data base, the same data base in use to publish the Airport Directory of the AIM. The Safety Board believes that the FAA should assure publication of all appropriate information contained in the data base.

The Greensburg airport does not require certification by the FAA according to 14 CFR 139. The airport manager/owner is responsible for accuracy of the data available to the FAA. However, at least two FAA surveys of this airport were certified by FAA inspectors between 1965 and 1976 while this lighting condition existed. These surveys recorded the proper condition, but did not result in publication of correct information in the AIM. Further, we understand that FAA Flight Service Stations annually receive Airport Master Record data on airports within their areas of jurisdiction, but their participation did not result in distribution of accurate information on this airport.

The FAA Airport Data Program solicits information annually from airport managers/owners to update the NFDC data base. In this case, the airport manager had responded to the annual solicitations, but that did not cause accurate publication. Possibly, the program does not provide sufficient guidelines to promote thorough review and proper submission of their airport data. There was no indication that anyone had compared the Airport Master Record data to that published in the AIM. The FAA Office of Airport Programs has reportedly, for some time, attempted to improve the methods used to obtain information on noncertificated public airports. We understand that current funding only provides for survey and verification of data on 30 percent of the airports involved, and that funds for a comprehensive program are included in the FAA's budget proposal for 1980.

The Safety Board believes that the inaccuracy of the published information on the Greensburg airport, coupled with failure of the system to detect that the information contained in the AIM and in the NFDC data base was not consistent, may be symptomatic of a system problem and not an isolated occurrence. Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

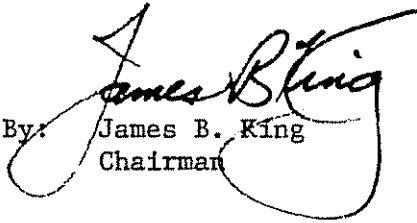
Review the procedures employed in the Airport Data Program to insure that instructions to airport managers/owners for annual solicitation of data are clearly and concisely stated, and that data from the Airport Master Record are compared in detail to that published in the NOS Airport/Facility Directory. (Class II-Priority Action) (A-78-59)

Examine the NFDC data base to determine what airport data are not published in the directory, test those data against the publication criteria, and publish as appropriate. Identify nonpublished data so that they are easily recognized as such by airport managers/owners when conducting annual reviews. (Class II-Priority Action) (A-78-60)

In coordination with the NOS and other appropriate agencies, establish symbology for use on the Sectional Aeronautical Chart that will indicate general limitations of airport lighting, with cross-referencing to the appropriate sources for details of the limitation. (Class II-Priority Action) (A-78-61)

Establish the complete program of airport data verification. (Class II-Priority Action) (A-78-62)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and DRIVER, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.

By:   
James B. King  
Chairman