



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: October 14, 2003

In reply refer to: A-03-47

Mr. Morton V. Plumb
Airport Director
Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport
Post Office Box 196960
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6960

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating transportation accidents, determining their probable cause, and making recommendations to prevent similar accidents from occurring. We are providing the following information to urge your organization to take action on the safety recommendation in this letter. The Safety Board is vitally interested in this recommendation because it is designed to prevent accidents and save lives.

This recommendation addresses safety concerns about the simultaneous use of runways 32 and 6L at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (ANC) and is based on operational issues discovered during the Safety Board's investigation of an incident involving an Airbus A-340 that occurred on January 25, 2002.¹ As a result, the Safety Board has issued two safety recommendations to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and one to the management at ANC. Information supporting this recommendation is discussed below. The Safety Board would appreciate a response from you within 90 days addressing the actions you have taken or intend to take to implement our recommendation.

As shown in figure 1, ANC has three runways: 32/14, 6L/24R, and 6R/24L. The end of runway 32 intersects with runway 6L. Flight crews of aircraft departing runway 32 normally depart from the displaced threshold of runway 32 and do not occupy the intersection of runways 32/6L; however, they may use the full runway (known as the runway 32 extension²) by informing ANC tower controllers on initial contact that they wish to do so. These aircraft then

¹ About 0243 Alaska standard time, China Airlines flight 011, an Airbus Industrie A-340-300, B-18805, was cleared for takeoff on runway 32 but took off from a taxiway instead. No injuries were reported and the airplane was not damaged. The full description of this incident, ANC02IA011, can be found on the Safety Board's Web site at <<http://www.nts.gov>>.

² According to airport certification and air traffic staff at the FAA Alaskan regional office, the runway 32 extension was constructed to permit heavy jets to depart from ANC at higher gross weights than would be possible without the additional takeoff distance.

line up with runway 32 and hold in the intersection of runway 32/6L, where they may be required to wait for some time depending on other traffic in the area. Other aircraft may be conducting approaches to runway 6L while runway 32 departures are holding at the intersection.

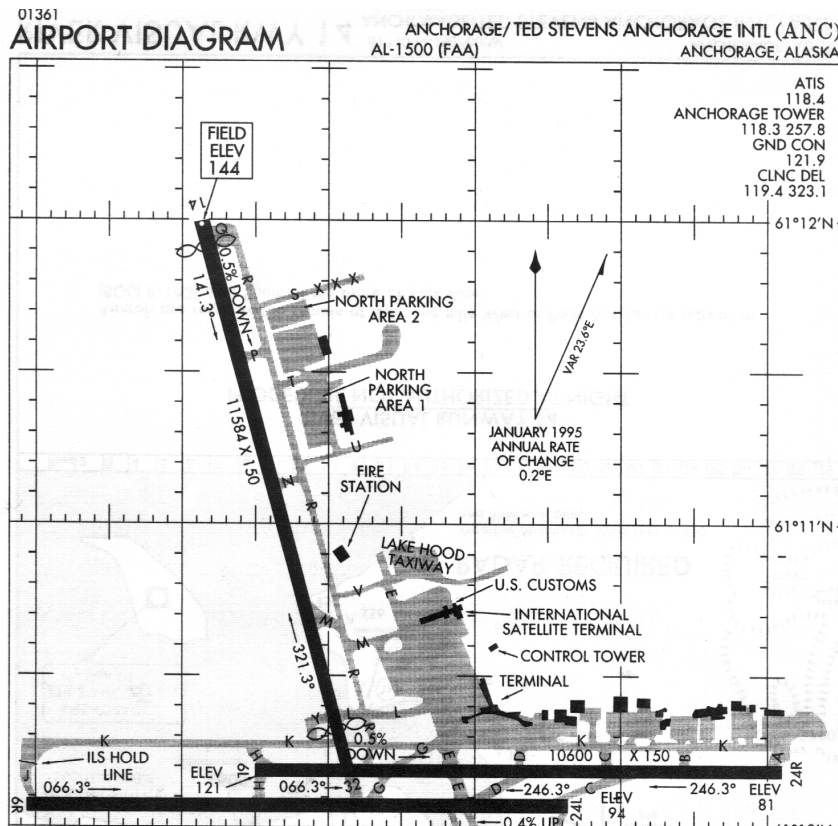


Figure 1. ANC Airport Diagram

According to local and regional air traffic staff, the planning stages of the runway 32 extension project at ANC included discussions about changing the airport's design to preclude holding aircraft on runway 32 and 6L. Among the alternatives considered were an extension of runway 32 and associated taxiways to a point southeast of runway 6R so that aircraft awaiting departure clearance would be clear of runways 6L and 6R, or an upgrade of the existing blast pad southeast of runway 32 to allow an aircraft to be held between runways 6L and 6R. Because holding aircraft on active runways increases the risk of ground collisions, the Safety Board encourages the use of alternative procedures whenever possible. In the case of ANC, the design of the airport leaves the tower with very limited options in handling full-length departures from runway 32. To remedy this situation, the Safety Board believes that the management of ANC should evaluate, in cooperation with the FAA, the airport's runway and taxiway layout to identify and, if necessary, construct holding areas for runway 32 departures that are clear of runways 6L and 6R.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that management of the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport:

Evaluate, in cooperation with the Federal Aviation Administration, the runway and taxiway layout of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport to identify and, if necessary, construct holding areas for runway 32 departures that are clear of runways 6L and 6R. (A-03-47)

In your response to the recommendation in this letter, please refer to Safety Recommendation A-03-47.

Chairman ENGLEMAN, Vice Chairman ROSENKER, and Members CARMODY, GOGLIA, and HEALING concurred in this recommendation.

Original Signed

By: Ellen G. Engleman
Chairman