

Investigation Synopsis

A vehicle carrying out a runway inspection was cleared onto the active runway ahead of an aircraft decelerating after landing. The investigation identified shortcomings in runway inspection procedures and the management of the internal review conducted after the incident. One Safety Recommendation is made.

Safety Recommendation 2019-003

To avoid clearing ground vehicles onto engaged runways.

Therefore, the following safety recommendation is made:

It is recommended that Air Navigation Solutions Ltd amend the wording of the Gatwick Airport Manual of Air Traffic Services Part 2, Chapter 10 and Supplementary Instruction 021 to specify how an aircraft is determined to have fully committed to vacating the runway, and ensure a vehicle cannot be cleared onto the runway ahead of an aircraft until the aircraft has done so.

Date Safety Recommendation made:

15/08/2019

Response Status

Not adequate

Action Status

Not enough information

Safety Recommendation status

Open

LATEST RESPONSE

Response received:

24/06/2020

ANSL had proposed a revision of the MATS Part 2 in line with this recommendation but after discussion with our CAA inspector, it was agreed that the proposal would be too limiting for the operation. We agreed that applied correctly and in line with ATC procedures outlined in existing documentation, a vehicle could be allowed to enter the runway without an aircraft having fully exited the runway. This would only be allowed on the understanding that the aircraft's crew were fully aware that the vehicle in question would be giving way/avoiding them on entering the runway. This would also be based on the understanding of the driver knowing their requirements for safely avoiding aircraft (in the case of the aircraft the

passing of relevant traffic information on the vehicle and its intention and in the case of the vehicle also hearing the traffic information being passed to the aircraft concerning his intentions and already being fully conversant with these procedures).

Review process

During my review I have noted the immediate actions that were carried out by both ANSL and GAL, and the follow up discussions and correspondence with both the AAIB and our local CAA ATM inspector. As I was not an employee of ANSL at the time, I feel that I have been able to carry out a relatively independent review into the incident, subsequent investigation and actions taken. I also feel it is good practice to re-visit and review what was completed after the event to ensure that everything was captured and to consider whether the immediate actions were appropriate or can be improved. I recognise that any safety event involving high intensity runway operations will have many aspects to consider and this is indicated in the AAIB report.

Summary of the review

1. The incident was primarily caused by controller error, in that they did not follow existing guidance in relation to managing vehicles entering the runway or providing relevant 'traffic information' about the vehicle to the crew. This error has been addressed through the

ATCO competency scheme both on an individual basis and through prescribed refresher training and more general communications to all of the Gatwick ATCOs.

1. The guidance in MATS Part 2 has been revised for those situations where the earlier mentioned understanding between the aircraft and vehicle is not achievable:

The vacating aircraft must be notified about the against-flow traffic inspection plan, then the vacating aircraft must clearly be established in the turn off the runway-centreline into the runway exit before the inspection vehicle is instructed to enter the runway.

2. There were some weaknesses in the procedures for runway inspections which have been addressed in the intervening period.

3. Any further issues in relation to runway inspections are to be addressed either through the Local Runway Safety Team or through routine meetings between GAL and ANSL.

Based on my experience of high intensity operations, I believe that the clear guidance now contained in MATS Part 2, when applied correctly, is an acceptably safe way to allow vehicles to enter the runway ahead of the aircraft fully vacating the runway. In essence, this guidance meets the high-level requirements of the safety recommendation. It is on this basis that ANSL formally request that the AAIB accepts this as closure of the recommendation. ANSL recognises that this guidance will need continued monitoring and will do so through the SMS, UCS and our work with GAL.

AAIB Assessment – Not adequate - Open

(EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers). It is not clear how the process described in the response meets the intent of the Safety Recommendation, or how it represents a change from the situation that existed at the time of the subject occurrence. The AAIB has invited the addressee to clarify its response and awaits a further update 30 October 2020.

RESPONSE HISTORY

Response received:

11/11/2019

- The ANSP and the airport company have introduced a new regime for runway inspections including the introduction of planned (rather than ad-hoc) delivery of inspections and requirements to only accept inspections in blocks meaning urgent on/off access (as in the incident being reported upon) is no longer required and not used.

- The appendix to this letter contains the original text and the new text that has been submitted to the CAA to address the recommendation. The process to introduce this as an instruction included a review with the local examiners and an assessment of the effect that this change may have on workload and/or complexity. The instruction is now with the CAA for review and approval. Upon receipt of the CAA approval this instruction will be published.

- A follow-on review of safety performance regarding runway inspections in light of this incident and subsequent to the changes to the procedures implemented. The review revealed no incidents or reported events and standards reporting showed the introduction has been delivered safely.

AAIB Assessment – Partially Adequate - Open

(EU Regulation 996/2010 article 18 refers)