Safety Information Bulletin
Aerodromes

SIB No.: **2020-07R1**

Issued: **17 July 2020**

Subject: **Preparation of Aerodromes to Resume Operations**

Note: This SIB is issued in the context of a project undertaken to provide guidance to allow the return to normal operations and it is part of several anticipated communications from EASA related to this project across various aviation domains.

Revision:
This SIB revises EASA SIB 2020-07 dated 04 May 2020.

Ref. Publications:
Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 dated 12 February 2014.

Applicability:
Competent authorities, aerodrome operators and air navigation service providers.

Description:
Following the outbreak of COVID-19 and due to the limitations imposed by individual States, the majority of flights have been suspended. Aerodromes have been forced to scale down or suspend their operations until flights resume. Furthermore, in many aerodromes across Europe, operational areas such as runways and taxiways are used for the long-term parking of grounded aircraft; aerodrome systems such as airfield lighting and radio navigation aids have been switched-off and regular inspections and maintenance of aerodrome infrastructure may not always be performed according to schedule. In addition, a number of staff may have been made redundant or may have not completed the required training, thereby limiting capability of the aerodrome to cope with increasing traffic.

For this reason, the aerodrome operators under their safety management system should establish a plan that ensures the safe gradual return to operations.

At this time, the safety concern described in this SIB is not considered to be an unsafe condition that would warrant Safety Directive (SD) action under Regulation (EU) 139/2014, Annex II, ADR.AR.A.040.

Recommendation(s):
The following recommendations aim to support the safe operation of aircraft at an aerodrome, and should be considered along with any other instructions related to health and security issues, as well as the provision of ground handling services.

This is information only. Recommendations are not mandatory.

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Aerodrome operators are responsible for ensuring the safety of operations at the aerodromes. This should be done in close cooperation and coordination with the air navigation service providers, air operators, ground handling service providers under the supervision of the competent authorities, taking into consideration also the instructions of the public health authorities.

Aerodrome operators should prepare a plan to support the return to normal operations which should include at least the following:

1. Overall inspection of the paved and unpaved surfaces, paying attention to:
    - General cleanliness, presence of foreign object debris (FOD) and any signs of damage to the pavement surface which could pose a risk to the aircraft operations;
    - Leakages and depressions due to long-term parked aircraft;
    - Drainage systems and storm water collection systems, in order to ensure that they are unobstructed.

2. Electrical power supply systems:
    - The status of the primary and secondary power supply systems, in particular those supporting the approach, runway and taxiway lighting, apron floodlighting, visual docking guidance systems, non-visual aids, Meteorology (MET) equipment, Air Traffic Services (ATS) installations (e.g. the air traffic control or aerodrome flight information services tower), rescue and firefighting station and every alerting and communication system;
    - Scheduled maintenance, if not performed, should be completed.

3. Non-visual aids for navigation check:
    - The status of non-visual aids for navigation, especially of those which were not in use during the lockdown period;
    - The issuance of a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) downgrading the status of the non-visual aids if scheduled flight checks have not been conducted;
    - Aircraft parked on taxiways do not infringe the critical and sensitive areas of non-visual aids;
    - The condition and height of grass and other vegetation around the non-visual aids.

4. Visual aids for navigation check:
    - The status of all lights, markings and signs, particularly when frequency of inspections has been reduced. Any inspection reports available should be reviewed and open items should be closed;
    - Lights, signs and markings are not obstructed by vegetation;
    - When the regular checks and the calibration of Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI) have not been conducted according to the schedule, a new calibration should be arranged before restoring operations;
    - Any temporary markings and signs which have been installed on runways, taxiways and aprons to accommodate overflow parking of aircraft should be removed prior to their use;
    - The status of the obstacle lights at the aerodrome should be verified and failed lights should be replaced.

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5. Rescue and firefighting:
   - The status of rescue and firefighting equipment and vehicles should be checked.
   - Availability of extinguishing agents appropriate to the rescue and firefighting level of protection should be ensured;
   - The maintenance of rescue and firefighting vehicles should be reviewed. Any scheduled maintenance that has not been performed should be completed as soon as possible;
   - Attention should be given to the fire stations that were not in use during the lockdown period;
   - Communication and alerting systems should be checked for proper functioning;
   - The status of the emergency access roads to the active runway(s) should be checked and special attention should be given to ensure that they have unobstructed access, particularly from parked aircraft;
   - Staffing levels should be appropriate to the rescue and firefighting level of protection available. The rescue and firefighting level of protection should be adjusted to the most demanding aircraft in terms of rescue and firefighting aerodrome category. In this case, the information should be promulgated via NOTAM;
   - Staff should be advised to always respect local rules for social distancing in the changing and social rooms. The safe distance to others should be adhered to also during off-duty periods, so as not to endanger themselves and other rescue and firefighting staff, and potentially setting off a spreading event that could affect the Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (RFFS) category.

6. Obstacle management:
   - The obstacles in the aerodrome's surrounding should be reviewed. The check should focus on the lighting and marking of the authorized obstacles as well as the emergence of new structures. Any unauthorized obstacles should be brought to the attention of the competent authorities of the Member State without delay;
   - Obstacle Free Zone(s), when established, should be thoroughly examined, especially when aircraft are parked on taxiways close to runways;
   - Obstacle protection surfaces of visual approach slope indicator systems (VASIS/PAPI) should be checked for possible infringements, particularly from parked aircraft;
   - ATS line of sight should be unobstructed, especially for the active runway(s) and taxiway(s) which are used for aircraft taxiing.

7. Wildlife hazard management:
   - The status of vegetation, habitat and land use management at the aerodrome should be checked;
   - In the case of increased bird activity at and around the aerodrome, a NOTAM should be issued to advise caution;
   - The status of wildlife activity reporting should be checked. The latest available reports should be reviewed and special focus should be given to areas which are known for wildlife activity;
   - The status of the aerodrome fences should be checked. Fences should be repaired, when necessary;
   - Availability and functioning of repellent systems should be checked;

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- Aircraft and other infrastructure, such as passenger boarding bridges, should be checked for possible nesting due to inactivity. Inform aircraft operators when wildlife activities are observed close to parked aircraft;
- Regular monitoring of wildlife activities should commence as soon as possible;
- Intensive use of active wildlife control methods before and right after the restart to disperse hazardous wildlife species from the aerodrome;
- A comparative analysis of wildlife monitoring and control data of all possible and confirmed wildlife strikes collected before and during the lockdown should be performed in order to identify possible new wildlife hazards raised during the lockdown.

8. Apron management:
   - The effective functioning of passenger boarding bridges, visual docking guidance systems, if applicable, and FOD management should be checked;
   - Depending on the size of the aerodrome and the expected traffic, a list of available aircraft stands and a stand allocation plan should be prepared. The plan should be communicated to the air traffic services and provider of apron management service, if applicable, as well as to ground handling service providers.

9. Aeronautical information management:
   - Any NOTAMS/publications in regard to restrictions to aircraft operations or closure (partial or full) of the aerodrome should be reviewed and, if required, should be amended or cancelled;
   - Any new restrictions, non-availability of infrastructure, services such as provision of ground handling services, fuel, obstacles and new procedures that may have an impact on flight operations should be published via NOTAM without delay.

10. Aerodrome emergency plan:
    - Equipment and facilities required for emergencies are available and functioning;
    - Participating organisations are available and capable to support in case of emergency;
    - Table top emergency exercises should be conducted in case when during the lockdown period partial or full scale emergency exercises have been postponed or cancelled. However, the aerodrome operator should also conduct the planned emergency exercises as soon as possible following coordination with the competent authority.

11. Airside works:
    - Work plans should be reviewed and revised accordingly and communicated to the contractors and aerodrome personnel;
    - Construction or maintenance work sites are appropriately marked and lighted;
    - For ongoing changes or when resuming construction works, it should be ensured that hypothesis and mitigating measures are still relevant and implemented;
    - NOTAMs, Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) Supplements and amendments related to airside works should be validated and updated if necessary.

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12. Vehicle/equipment readiness:
   - All the vehicles and equipment operating on the movement area, especially those which have not been used for an extensive period of time, should be maintained and functioning properly;
   - Communication systems should be checked for proper functioning.

13. Disabled aircraft removal plan:
   - The information published in the AIP should be reviewed and updated as necessary;
   - The disabled aircraft removal plan, the availability of equipment, personnel and any other arrangements should be reviewed.

14. Availability and competence of personnel:
   - Availability of a sufficient number of personnel should be ensured;
   - Training records should be reviewed and, if necessary, refresher trainings should be conducted. E-Learning training courses may be used to facilitate theoretical training and physical distancing;
   - The content of the aerodrome manual and, in particular, all the procedures contained therein, should be reviewed;
   - Personnel should be briefed on the new or changed procedures, possible changes to the infrastructure that have taken place during the lockdown period and familiarize themselves with the new working environment.

15. Coordination and collaboration:
   - Stakeholder preparedness:
      i. The availability of staff and equipment should be ensured by the ground handling service providers;
      ii. Specific procedures should be communicated in advance and a coordination team should be established to address issues that may emerge;
      iii. It should be ensured that fuel suppliers have adequately trained staff and equipment to refuel the aircraft. Hydrant systems and fuel bowsers should be checked to mitigate the risk of fuel contamination.
   - Air Traffic Services and Meteorology:
      i. Coordination should be performed with air traffic services to ensure the readiness of aerodrome for return to operations and agree upon any operational restrictions;
      ii. Coordination should be performed with local MET office to ensure the availability of meteorological services.

Competent authorities should monitor the effective implementation of the plan to return to normal operations.

Contact(s):
For further information contact the EASA Aerodromes Standards & Implementation Section, Flight Standards Directorate, E-mail: aerodromes@easa.europa.eu.

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