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### **FAA Extends Hawaii AC Deadline**

Following the terrible wildfire that occurred in Maui earlier this month, the FAA has chosen to extend the comment period for a draft advisory circular (AC) that pertains to commercial air tour operators in Hawaii. The opportunity for public input now extends until Oct. 6. Initially introduced on Aug. 4 with a 30-day window for comments, the document aims to address crucial concerns.

The AC applies to commercial air tour operators in Hawaii who wish to obtain an authorization to operate below the regulatory minimum flight altitudes of 14 CFR Part 136, Appendix A, Section 6(a), which restrict any type of commercial air tour operations at an altitude below 1,500 ft. above ground level (agl) in the state.

The AC is intended to assist certificate holders and operators with the development of operational processes and procedures, and with the recommended pilot training, as part of the application package for the Operations Specification (OpSpec)/Letter of Authorization (LOA) B048, Commercial Air Tour Operations Below 1,500 Feet Above the Surface in the State of Hawaii.

HAI is currently working with Hawaii operators to find a solution that works for all. The FAA expects the AC to take effect early next year. If interested in reading a more detailed summary of this AC, please head over to our previous [VTOL Advocate article](#).

### **FAA AC on Reporting of Laser Illumination of Aircraft**

This week, the FAA issued an advisory circular (AC) addressing the reporting of laser illumination incidents involving aircraft. Over the past few years, the FAA, in collaboration with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, has made efforts to engage the public in reporting such laser-related events. Currently, pointing a laser at an aircraft is considered a federal crime.

AC 70–2B offers comprehensive guidance to civilian flight crews regarding the reporting of laser illumination incidents. It also provides recommendations for appropriate actions to mitigate these incidents, ensuring the ongoing safety and organization of flight operations. The deadline for submitting written comments on this AC is Sep. 15, 2023.

The objective of AC 70-2B is to collect information from pilots and aircrews who have been subjected to unauthorized laser illumination. The stipulated reporting procedure entails an immediate notification broadcast to air traffic control (ATC) when an incident occurs. If the affected flight crew is operating within uncontrolled airspace, a broadcast alert about the incident is also recommended.

With 1,080 laser strikes having been reported to the FAA so far this year alone, the goal remains to gather information to improve aviation safety measures.

## FAA Allots More than \$121 Million to Airport Safety

This week, the FAA granted more than \$121 million to airports nationwide to mitigate the potential for runway incursions. The initiative encompasses reconfiguring certain taxiways, implementing advanced lighting systems, and enhancing airfield flexibility.

New projects announced under the initiative:

- **Boston Logan International Airport (KBOS), Massachusetts:** \$44.9 million to simplify airfield layout and rehabilitate pavement to ensure safe airfield operations
- **Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (PANC), Alaska:** \$39.8 million to simplify airfield layout by removing certain taxiways and installing a new taxiway lighting system to enhance safe airfield operations during low-visibility conditions
- **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (KDCA), Virginia:** \$5 million to begin construction of new connector taxiways to reduce delays among existing traffic and meet FAA design standards
- **Willow Run Airport (KYIP), Michigan:** \$12.8 million to construct a parallel taxiway to eliminate the need for aircraft to back-taxi on the runway
- **Eugene F. Kranz Toledo Express Airport (KTOL), Ohio:** \$4.6 million to improve the airport's taxiway safety area erosion-control system to eliminate ponding on airfield surfaces
- **Richmond International Airport (KRIC), Virginia:** \$5.6 million to meet FAA design standards
- **Jackson Hole Airport (KJAC), Wyoming:** \$2.6 million to construct a taxiway to eliminate the need for aircraft to back-taxi on the runway and to maintain the structural integrity of the

pavement

- **Naples Airport (KAPF), Florida:** \$3.5 million to improve nonstandard pavement geometry and enable the safe movement of vehicles and ground service equipment.

These grants stem from a safety summit the FAA hosted in March. Additionally, the agency is introducing a range of runway-safety technologies designed to enhance situational awareness among pilots and controllers, including runway status lights, airport surface detection equipment (ASDE), and ASDE-X taxiway arrival-prediction technology.

## GAO Releases NTSB Management and Operations Report

This month, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a [report](#) focusing on enhancing management and operations at the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). The NTSB's pivotal role in aviation safety involves investigating transportation accidents, determining their causes, and providing safety recommendations.

Despite advancements in the transportation sector, the NTSB's workforce has remained unchanged for two decades. Congressional concerns related to this situation regard the timeliness and quality of investigation reports, alongside workforce capacity. The GAO's evaluation addresses the NTSB's performance planning, data-driven decision-making enhancements, and recent workforce planning efforts aimed at identifying skills gaps.

The analysis found that the NTSB's most recent strategic plan and annual performance plan fulfilled 14 of 25 statutory content requirements requested by federal laws on agency performance planning. The board's strategic plan lacked key aspects crucial to effective federal performance management. For example, while goals were established for organizational efficiency, they did not align with the NTSB's central mission of enhancing transportation safety. To ensure accountability to Congress, the NTSB should meet all statutory requirements in its performance planning documents, the analysis noted.

Furthermore, despite attempts to improve the use of labor cost data, the NTSB still struggles to apply such information for resource allocation and decision-making. Efforts have been taken to assess the skills of the NTSB workforce, but these initiatives lack comprehensive insight into the required skills and the number of employees who possess them. Consequently, the NTSB faces limitations in recognizing skills gaps across its personnel.

Overall, the GAO's recommendations encompass six key points, including urging the NTSB to guarantee the fulfillment of all statutory requirements in its forthcoming performance planning documents, finalize a labor cost data analysis and utilization system, and enhance the efficiency of its skills gap assessments.

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