

SWEALPA advise loading extra fuel for flights into Stockholm Arlanda (ESSA) following unexplained failure of lighting system

Background

During the afternoon of 16 December, Stockholm Arlanda International Airport (ESSA) suffered a system breakdown to all its RWY and approach lighting systems. Consequently, the airport was closed to all incoming and outgoing traffic for approx. 90 minutes.

The closure caused all incoming flights to be diverted all over Sweden. The Swedish Air Line Pilots' Association (SWEALPA) report that as of 21 December the actual causes of the initial breakdown, and why the backup systems failed, has not been fully determined, although a software problem is suspected to be the most likely cause. It is important to note that the full investigation into the failures will not be carried out until after the holiday season (mid-January at least).

Recommendation

Until the investigation is complete and measures to rectify the problems have been completed, SWEALPA strongly recommends crews operating into Arlanda (ESSA) plan with diversion fuel and consider adding extra holding fuel for arrivals during the hours of darkness, regardless of expected weather conditions. Furthermore, flight planning Arlanda as an alternate should be avoided until the problem has been rectified.

SWEALPA remain in constant contact with the airport, ATC and the Swedish CAA and will update these recommendations as the investigation progresses.