

Confusion by some carriers over the recommendations of FAA Notice 8000.309

US ALPA has issued the following Safety Alert which addresses operations when weather conditions exist with precipitation in the form of light ice pellets or snow pellets.



ALPA SAFETY ALERT 2006-02

Discussion:

In October 2005, FAA Flight Standards Service (AFS) issued FAA Notice N 8000.309, Dispatching During Precipitation Conditions of Ice Pellets, Snow Pellets, or Other Icing Events for which No Holdover Times Exist. The notice recommended that departures in ice pellets and other extreme weather conditions not be authorized due to lack of data, such as holdover times (HOT), fluid failure criteria, aircraft performance, and other mitigating factors that would reduce the risks of operating in these conditions.

Some carriers have interpreted the FAA Notice to permit operations during snow pellet or ice pellet conditions, provided;

1. No deice or anti-ice fluid is applied, and
2. The operator can determine that no contamination is adhering to the surface.

This interpretation of the Notice does not account for the possibility of residual ice on the wing following an exposure to ice pellets on an untreated wing. Even momentary exposures to ice pellets may

result in a layer of clear ice adhering to the upper surface of the wing, thus degrading performance by an undetermined amount. This contamination may be extremely difficult to visually detect. It is important to note that meteorological conditions may worsen between the time of a visual contamination check (on the aircraft's unprotected surfaces) and the beginning of the takeoff roll.

The ALPA Ground Deicing Project Team has been actively involved with the government and industry in determining adequate holdover times for ice and snow pellet conditions. Testing is scheduled to continue throughout the year in order to reach consensus on the effective holdover times for these particular conditions. ALPA will encourage the FAA and Transport Canada to conduct flight and wind tunnel testing that lead to holdover times that more accurately reflect the operational environment. At present, TC has chosen to continue with the guidance offered by the HOTs, that no holdover times exist for conditions of "ice pellets, snow pellets, or other icing events.."

Recommendations:

- Until the industry identifies holdover times for ice and snow pellets, aircrews should exercise extreme caution while operating in these conditions.
- ALPA does not endorse operations in ice or snow pellet conditions regardless of whether anti-icing procedures are conducted.
- Extreme caution must be exercised when operating in freezing precipitation without anti-icing fluid applied.
- The flight crew must always comply with company guidance.
- The flight crew, in conjunction with the company, must exercise their best judgment in determining whether to initiate the flight.
- Pilots in command must always exercise command authority if they believe that the safety of flight may be compromised.



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