

Low/reduced visibility operations at Canadian airports

ALPA International has issued the following operations bulletin:

Background:

On March 12, 2009 new rules governing restrictions on airport surface movements in low visibility conditions became effective at Canada's airports. These rules will be enforced by Transport Canada and may impact the way you operate.

As of the effective date, Canadian airports are required to publish the level of service they are capable of providing for each runway. Flight crews are now required to ensure that the visibility conditions are at or above the advertised level of service prior to taxi operations. Pilots who operate on the surface below the advertised visibility service level will be subject to violation.

Please be advised that Air Traffic Services (ATS) personnel will issue a taxi clearance even if conditions are below the required visibility for taxi operations. This clearance does not permit operations, except in accordance with the low or reduced visibility airport operations plan. ALPA has requested that NavCanada inform pilots that the visibility level is below the published limit, although they will not restrict you from taxiing. ***Therefore it is possible for crews to now accept a taxi clearance to or from the gate and illegally operate on the airport surface due to the new regulations.***

Please note that the visibility limits available under the Approach Ban regulations have no direct relationship to the new surface regulations. If visibility deteriorates below the published service level after the aircraft has passed the Final Approach Fix (FAF) on approach, or after the aircraft has begun taxi for take-off, then operations may continue. However, no aircraft will be able to push back, or continue past the FAF with visibilities lower than the service level that is published.

Recommendations:

Lacking any specific guidance from your airline, pilots are cautioned that taxi visibility limits and runway operation (take off and landing) visibility limits may not coincide, ***in either direction***, and that it is imperative that you check your legality for any phase of operation prior to accepting any clearance to operate your aircraft.

Pilots should also take note of the following:

1. Follow your Standard Operation Procedures.
2. Confirm the published service level for airport/runway you are using.
3. Familiarise yourself with applicable company, NavCanada and Transport Canada information on new requirements.

Further Reading:

- ▶ www.tc.gc.ca/Civilaviation/IMSdoc/ACs/300/PDF/302-001.pdf
- ▶ www.tc.gc.ca/civilaviation/commerce/circulars/AC0256.htm
- ▶ www.tc.gc.ca/CivilAviation/IMSdoc/ACs/700/700-007.htm