

# Canadian Airport Low visibility operational restrictions

## Introduction

In April of this year, IFALPA published a Safety Bulletin which dealt with a confusing series of regulations and advisory circular with respect to operations at Canadian Airports under Reduced or Low Visibility conditions (*See 10SAB01*). These rules opened the possibility of crews unknowingly being in violation of the low visibility operating procedures. Transport Canada has now, after industry consultation, revised those regulations into a more clearly stated rule. The difference between the procedures at towered vs. non-towered sites is that in the absence of a control facility, there is no guarantee that pilots will operate as per the airport's plan (that is to say, no positive control), therefore higher restrictions apply for departure operations. In, summary these new regulations, which came into force on 17 December 2009, are as follows:

 ***At airports with an operating ATC Tower, the visibility for arrival and departure is determined by the following hierarchy:***

- ▶ RVR of intended runway (subject to special routing/procedures)
- ▶ Aerodrome reported visibility
- ▶ Visibility as determined by the pilot

 ***For arrival operations at airports without an operating ATC Tower, the visibility for arrival is determined by:***

- ▶ RVR of intended runway
- ▶ Aerodrome reported visibility
- ▶ Visibility as determined by the pilot

 ***For departure operations at airports without an operating ATC Tower, the visibility for taxiing for departure is determined by:***

- ▶ Aerodrome visibility (METAR);
- ▶ Any reported RVR; (may be subject to special routing/procedures – see Note 2, below)
- ▶ Visibility as determined by the pilot.

Please note also that the absence of a published level of service for a runway or airport will indicate that the minimum visibility is the default standard of ½ statute mile – RVR 2600. None of the changes affects the current requirements imposed by the Approach Ban Regulations, but should be complementary to them, in other words if you can meet the approach ban regulations, you will be legal to taxi into the gate.

## Transport Canada regulations in detail

### 4.2 Aerodrome Operating Restrictions – Visibility

- (1) Paragraph 602.96(2)(b) of the CARs requires that before taking off from, landing at or otherwise operating an aircraft at an aerodrome, the Pilot-in-Command (PIC) of the aircraft shall be satisfied that the aerodrome is suitable for the intended operation.

- (2) One factor that needs to be considered to ensure compliance with paragraph 602.96(2)(b) of the CARs is the Aerodrome Operating Visibility. For the purpose of the PIC determining if the aerodrome is suitable for operations, the aerodrome operating visibility is defined as follows:

**(a) At sites with an active ATC Tower:**

(in accordance with published airport operational procedures)

- (i) For arrivals and departures (*refer to Note 1*), the aerodrome operating visibility is in accordance with the following hierarchy:

1. RVR for the runway of intended use;
2. aerodrome visibility (METAR);
3. visibility as determined by the pilot.

**(b) At sites without an active ATC Tower:**

(outside ATC operating hours, MF, Unicom, CARS, or advisory sites, etc...)

- (i) For arrivals, the aerodrome operating visibility is in accordance with the following hierarchy:

1. RVR for the runway of intended use;
2. aerodrome visibility (METAR);
3. visibility as determined by the pilot.

- (ii) For departures (*refer to Note 2*), the aerodrome operating visibility is the lowest of the following visibilities:

1. aerodrome visibility (METAR);
2. any reported RVR;
3. visibility as determined by the pilot.

**Note 1:** For departure, where the reported aerodrome visibility is below the level of service for the intended runway of operations, RVR for that runway may be used by the pilot. However pilots need to be cognisant because the aerodrome is in a reduced or low visibility condition, the aerodrome operator may have elected to either establish special procedures pursuant to an RVOP/LVOP to continue operations such as to restrict aircraft on the manoeuvring area to one at any time, or to actually cease operations (*refer to Note 4*).

**Note 2:** For departure, where the reported aerodrome visibility is below the level of service for the intended runway of operations, RVR for that runway may only be used by the pilot where special procedures have been established by the aerodrome operator pursuant to an RVOP/LVOP, such as to restrict aircraft on the manoeuvring area to one at any time (*refer to Note 4*).

**Note 3:** Tower observed visibility does not take precedence over reported ground visibility. Where ground visibility is reported tower observed visibility is considered advisory only. However where ground visibility is not reported, tower reported visibility replaces ground visibility and needs to be considered in the determination of the aerodrome operating visibility.

- (3) For the purpose of paragraphs 4.2 (4) and (5), the visibility is less than the minimum visibility required for landing and taxi operations if the aerodrome's operating visibility is less than the level of service published in the CFS for the runway of intended use.
- (4) Where the aerodrome operating visibility as set out in paragraph 4.2 (2), is less than the minimum visibility published in the CFS, taxi operations are deemed to be occurring below the published aerodrome operating visibility; except when:

(a) visibility deteriorates below the published aerodrome operating visibility after the aircraft has commenced taxi for departure (including de-icing stop) Note that take-off limits will still apply;

(b) visibility deteriorates below the published aerodrome operating visibility after the aircraft has landed and is taxiing to the destination on the aerodrome;

(c) the aircraft is taxiing on the manoeuvring area as authorised by ATC in accordance with the aerodrome's published operational procedures; or

(d) the aircraft is taxiing on the manoeuvring area for purposes other than take-off or landing as authorised by the Aerodrome Operator in accordance with the aerodrome's RVOP/LVOP.

**Note 4:** For (c) and (d), the Aerodrome Operator will publish special reduced/low visibility restrictions or procedures, where required, for pilots in the appropriate aeronautical publication(s).

- (5) Where the Aerodrome operating visibility as set out in paragraph 4.2 (2), is less than the minimum visibility published in the CFS, a landing is deemed to occur below the published aerodrome operating visibility for the runway of intended use; except where:

(a) at the time a visibility report is received, the aircraft has passed the FAF inbound or, where there is no FAF, the point where the final approach course is intercepted;

- (b) the RVR for the runway of intended landing is varying between distances less than and greater than the minimum RVR and the ground visibility is equal to or greater than the minimum visibility;
- (c) at sites without an active ATC Tower, the ground visibility is varying between distances less than and greater than the minimum ground visibility and the RVR is equal to or greater than the minimum visibility; or
- (d) at sites without an active ATC Tower, prior to 1,000' above aerodrome elevation the PIC determines that a localised meteorological phenomenon is affecting the ground visibility by observing that the runway of intended landing and the taxi route to the destination on the aerodrome are seen and recognised.

For further information, consult the following for more details on the procedures:

- ▶ Canada Air Pilot – General Section
- ▶ Canada Air Pilot – Take-off Minima/Departure procedures
- ▶ Canada Flight Supplement – individual airport/runway levels of service
- ▶ Nav Canada AIP Supplements 52/09 & 51/09

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