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The Global Voice of Pilots
Safety Bulletin

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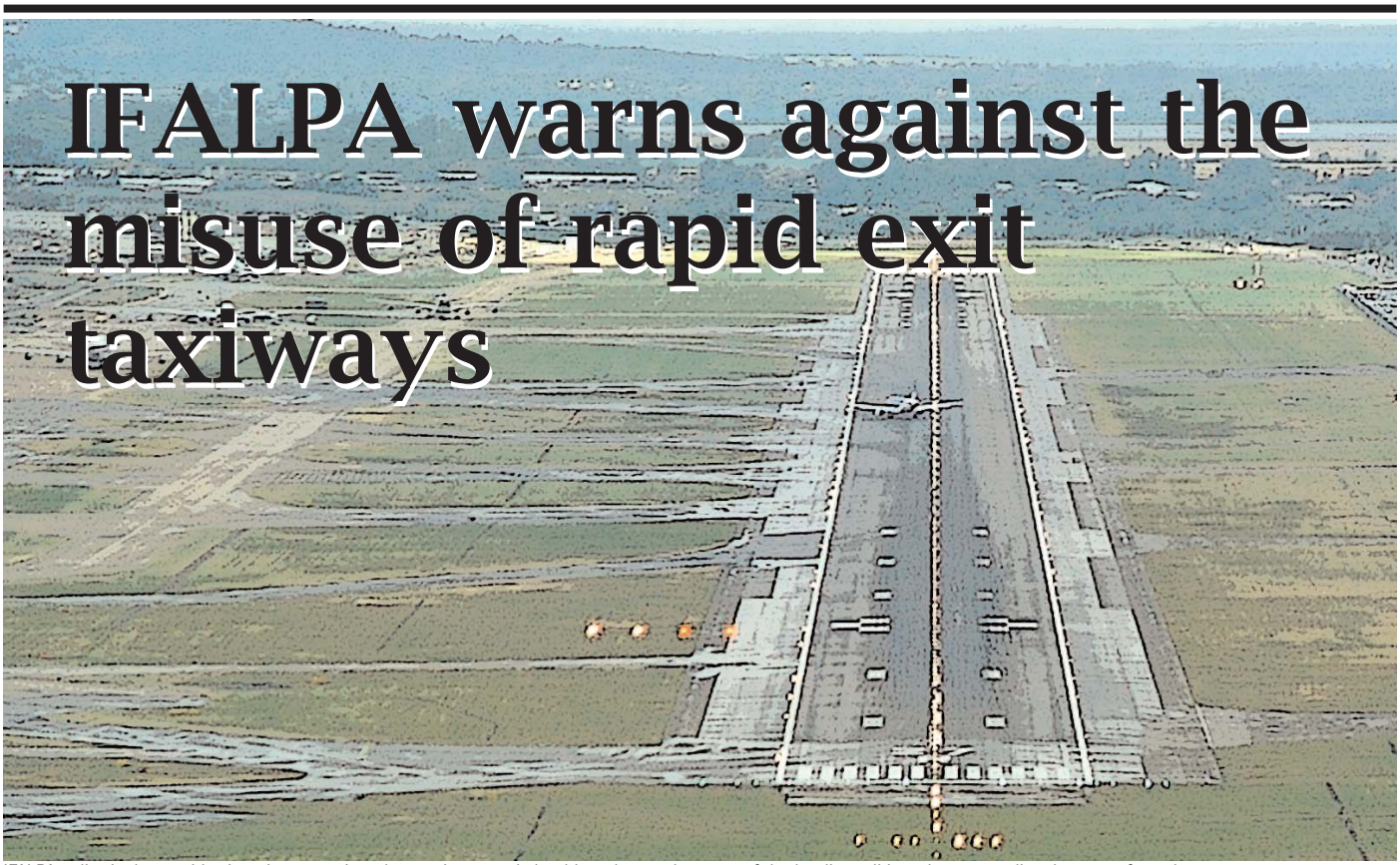
IFALPA warns against the misuse of rapid exit taxiways



IFALPA policy is that rapid exit taxiways are just that, taxiways and should not be used as part of the landing roll in order to expedite clearance from the runway.

At a number of airports with large traffic volumes and a consequently high movement rate including, but not limited to, London Heathrow, Frankfurt and Los Angeles, pilots are being asked to expedite clearance of the landing runway by entering rapid exit taxiways (RETs) at speeds higher than those normal for taxiing. Some airports, for example Oslo, have constructed rapid exit taxiways with a continuous curvature with the purpose of even higher exit speeds. However due to the lack of a straight portion, braking, especially under degraded friction moments, is considerably reduced. As a result, safety is compromised not only through the risks from excessive speed, and reduced braking opportunities, but also because at airports where the rapid exit taxiway intersects with another runway the risk of incursions is elevated.

Taxiways are for taxiing

The IFALPA policy states that *the advantage of rapid exit taxiways is that less time is taken to turn off the runway and not that it allows part of the landing run to be completed on it.*
Therefore, the IFALPA recommendation is that on roll out after landing pilots reduce speed to an appropriate taxi pace and then exit the runway via the next available exit. Furthermore, IFALPA policy goes on to state that *rapid exit taxiways shall be constructed in such a way that crossing a runway via a rapid exit taxiway is not possible* . Clearly, this is not the case at a number of airports and pilots should exercise due vigilance at these airports with a taxiway/runway con figuration that allows a direct crossing of a runway from a rapid exit taxiway.

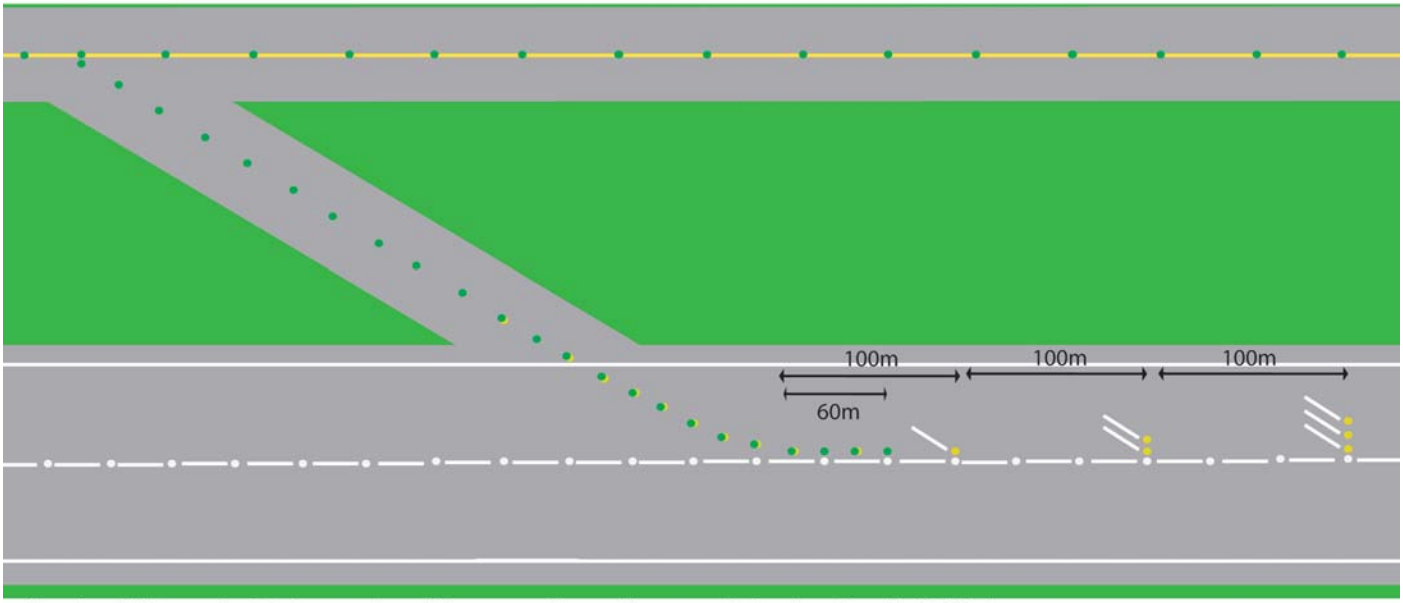
In addition, crews should be aware that not all oblique taxiways are either designated, or designed as rapid exit taxiways, the geometry of some oblique taxiways precludes entry at speeds normally associated with true Rapid Exit Taxiways. Taxiway entry speeds are normally published in the aerodrome information.

Many airports routinely use Rapid EXIT Taxiways for departures, particularly of commuter type aircraft in an effort to increase departure throughput. A RET is designed as a runway EXIT and not as an entry. Because of the oblique design of RET s, this practice exposes the crews to a very real possibility of a runway incursion or worse because of the diffi

culty in seeing traffic either on the runway at the threshold which may be on a take off run, or traffic on final for the runway. Crews are encouraged to decline the use of any taxiways as departure points unless a completely clear view of the runway threshold area and the approach path is available to the crew waiting for departure clearance. This can only be adequately achieved when the runway entry is perpendicular to the runway which is why IFALPAs policy is that runway entries should be perpendicular to the runway direction.
In addition IFALPA recommends that airports consider the installation of rapid exit taxiway indicator lights (RETILs) these lights and markings a valuable assistance to pilots in regulating their deceleration rate to ensure they can exit the runway at an optimum but safe speed

Capacity is important, however, safety is paramount, and therefore pilots should exit runways at a speed that is reasonable and safe for the prevailing conditions as well as the RET geometry and width but in any case this should be at a speed that is appropriate to the conditions.

Rapid Exit Taxiway Indicator Lights (RETILs)



In addition to the 3-2-1 countdown lights some airports, for example London Gatwick (EGKK), have painted white hash marks to enhance the visibility of the light during daylight operations.