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Position

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Remission Factor

BACKGROUND

Adequate Rescue and Firefighting Services (RFF) are essential to ensure a high chance of survival in the event of an airplane accident. To ensure this proper RFF service is available for a certain type of operations, aerodromes are categorized. This categorization is based on the fire extinguishing requirements of the largest airplane using the aerodrome and is embedded in ICAO Annex 14 Volume 1. It is provided as information for aircraft operators, assisting them in making a risk assessment for the operation to a specific aerodrome.

In 1995, with the publication of Annex 14 Volume 1, 2nd Edition, ICAO introduced the possibility for aerodromes to lower their aerodrome category for RFF by 1 unit, while maintaining the possibility for operations by a large number of aircraft (700 movements in the 3 busiest months of the year) which would normally require a higher aerodrome category. This provision was intended to be temporary and be phased out in 2005 at the latest. However, in 2009, with the publication of Annex 14, Volume 1, 5th Edition, this temporary provision was amended to be permanent.

As result of a lower aerodrome category, aerodrome operators are only required to fulfill lower requirements for RFF services, such as the number of emergency vehicles, amount of staff and quantity of extinguishing agents. When operating to an aerodrome with a lower RFF category than normally needed by its airplane, the aircraft operator is responsible for conducting a risk assessment. By doing so, it should be determined by the operator if the aerodrome considered is still suitable for its operations.

Usage of this provision means that, for example, for the Airbus A320 with a normal RFF category of 6, reduction to RFF category 5 is possible. This reduction will result in less RFF crew, approximately 30% less extinguishing agent, but also only one crash tender instead of two normally required, making it impossible to extinguish fire from two sides of the aircraft at a time. This results in a serious degradation of the chances of survival for crew and passengers in case of emergency.

This provision in ICAO Annex 14 is also known as the Remission Factor, which has also been incorporated in ICAO doc 9137, Airport Services Manual, Part 1.

POSITION

The Remission Factor is allowing the operation of larger airplanes to aerodromes where RFF services are inadequate for these airplane categories. For several widely used airplane types, this reduction results in far less RFF service than required. This imposes an unnecessary safety risk to aircrew, RFF crew and passengers, solely for economic reasons.

Any day, something unpredictable can cause an aircraft accident, placing every one of those lives at risk. Without the means immediately at hand to apply appropriate quantities of fire retardant foam within 2-3 minutes, lives may be lost in what would otherwise have been a survivable situation. Fire is the greater killer when it happens after a crash landing. There have been numerous instances when the impact of the landing did not result in passenger fatalities, but the ensuing fire did.

IFALPA strongly opposes the use of the Remission Factor. We do not support airplane operations to aerodromes with a lower RFF category than what would normally be required. Minimum aerodrome categorization should be based on the largest airplane using the aerodrome, as specified in ICAO Annex 14, table 9-1:

Table 9-1. Aerodrome category for rescue and firefighting

Aerodrome category (1)	Aeroplane overall length (2)	Maximum fuselage width (3)
1	0 m up to but not including 9 m	2 m
2	9 m up to but not including 12 m	2 m
3	12 m up to but not including 18 m	3 m
4	18 m up to but not including 24 m	4 m
5	24 m up to but not including 28 m	4 m
6	28 m up to but not including 39 m	5 m
7	39 m up to but not including 49 m	5 m
8	49 m up to but not including 61 m	7 m
9	61 m up to but not including 76 m	7 m
10	76 m up to but not including 90 m	8 m