

Auckland (NZAA) Unplanned Runway Closures

BACKGROUND

The Auckland Airport runway 23L/05R has been deteriorating over the past few years. The maintenance required to keep the runway surface in a usable condition has increased significantly, however, this has not kept up with the rate at which the runway is deteriorating. As a result, there have been over 15 short notice unplanned runway closures. One, on 24 January 2020, resulted in the runway being closed for 40 minutes and causing the diversion of 9 aircraft, including a wide body international arrival.

Auckland Airport management are planning large scale works for the runway, including replacement of the concrete slabs near the touchdown zones of both 23L and 05R. However, this work will not begin until later this year and will take some months to complete.



CONCERNS

Single runway at Auckland

Auckland Airport currently has only one runway (23L/05R). This means there is no contingency when the runway is closed at short notice for any reason. This increases the risk when flying to Auckland and not carrying an alternate.

Foreign object debris

With the increasing occurrences of damage to the runway there has been an increased risk of foreign object debris (FOD) damage. Some pieces of broken concrete have been reported up to 30cm by 30cm and 12cm thick.

Increasing frequency of runway closures

The runway closures due to defects in the runway surface alone have averaged 15 minutes over the past two years. This trend suggests the runway closure time is increasing, ranging from 10-40 minutes.

CONSIDERATIONS

As these runway closures are not planned and are unable to be forecast, it is suggested that pilots should always carry a technical alternate for Auckland. Alternatively, consider carrying a minimum of 20 minutes extra holding fuel for arrival at Auckland.