

Operating Aircraft with Deactivated Brakes

NOTE

This Safety Bulletin is an advisory and does not supersede any national or international regulations, company procedures, or requirements.

BACKGROUND

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) is committed to promoting the highest standards of aviation safety worldwide. As a global organization representing professional pilots, IFALPA continuously monitors emerging safety concerns to proactively address potential risks that may impact the aviation industry.

Recently, IFALPA has become aware that some aircraft are intentionally being operated with deactivated brakes or without a fully operational braking system. Whilst the Federation acknowledges that airlines may face operational challenges that require temporary measures, such actions should never impact safety.

SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

1. Reduced Brake Effectiveness

Deactivated or malfunctioning brakes severely reduce an aircraft's ability to decelerate or stop effectively during landing and taxiing, leading to potential runway overruns, runway excursions, and ground collisions. This jeopardizes the safety of passengers, crew, and ground personnel.

2. Impaired Emergency Response

In the event of an emergency or rejected takeoff, functional brakes are crucial for a timely and controlled evacuation. If the brakes are deactivated, the aircraft's ability to evacuate passengers in an efficient and safe manner may be severely compromised.

3. Loss of Control

Operating an aircraft with (partially) inoperative brakes can lead to reduced control during taxiing, landing, and ground maneuvers, increasing the risk of runway incursions and collisions with other aircraft or obstacles on the ground.

4. Unintended Consequences

Deactivating aircraft systems can have negative repercussions that might not be obvious. As aircraft become more technologically advanced, some systems become linked, or depend on data from other systems to function correctly. The anti-skid system, for example, works in pair with the braking system to prevent the wheel from skidding. Operating with a deactivated system in contravention of the minimum equipment list could result in unknown consequences for other systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Operators should strictly adhere to all applicable aviation regulations and safety standards, including those related to aircraft maintenance and operation. Deactivating brakes should only be done in compliance with approved procedures and with the knowledge and approval of the appropriate regulatory authority.

Before considering any action that involves operating an aircraft with deactivated brakes, operators should conduct a comprehensive risk assessment. This assessment should take into account all potential safety hazards and implement effective mitigation measures to minimize risks.

The safety of passengers, crew, and the public should always be the paramount concern in aviation operations. Operating aircraft with deactivated brakes poses serious safety risks that should not be underestimated or ignored.

IFALPA calls upon all stakeholders, including airlines, regulatory authorities, and maintenance organizations, to work together to ensure strict compliance with safety standards and best practices in aircraft operations.