

CHAPTER 9. LOW VISIBILITY TAXI OPERATIONS

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1775. GENERAL. This section contains guidance to be used by inspectors for implementing procedures concerning low visibility taxi operations as contained in Advisory Circular (AC) 120-57, “Surface Movement Guidance and Control System”; and the responsibilities of air carriers and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) field personnel to implement low visibility taxi operations as developed for each appropriate airport in accordance with the AC.

1777. BACKGROUND. Ground movement of equipment and aircraft during periods of visibility of less than 1,200 feet runway visual range (RVR) has become more common as ground navigational aids (NAVAID) and onboard aircraft systems have advanced. Recent ground accidents and incidents during taxi in low visibility conditions point to the need to improve taxi guidance and control systems. AC 120-57 provides guidance for the development and implementation of a surface movement guidance and control system (SMGCS) and an SMGCS plan for each airport where reduced visibility taxi is to be authorized. Each SMGCS plan contains operational procedures for taxi during periods of low visibility. These procedures are documented in the SMGCS as flightcrew information and low visibility taxi route chart guidance for a specific airport. The SMGCS chart and its related plan are developed and maintained by the airport operator in consultation with users and the FAA through SMGCS working group activity.

1779. APPLICABILITY. AC 120-57, in conjunction with Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 139 and other related AC’s and orders, applies to all airports seeking approval for takeoff and landing operations below 600 feet RVR and for all airports seeking initial Category III (CAT III) landing approvals. All airports conducting operations below 1,200 feet RVR should develop an SMGCS in accordance with the guidance in AC 120-57. Air carriers that operate during periods of low visibility at airports that require an SMGCS shall operate in accordance with the developed procedures.

1781. AIR CARRIER RESPONSIBILITIES. Air carriers shall include SMGCS procedures in their operations manuals for all applicable airfields. Air-

crew indoctrination, initial, and recurrent training programs shall include low visibility taxi procedures where applicable.

1783. FAA RESPONSIBILITIES. As described in AC 120-57, each SMGCS working group, led by the airport operator, should contain membership of the local air traffic control (ATC) facility; the local FAA airports office (district or regional); the regional office (Flight Procedures Branch and appropriate Flight Standards District Office (FSDO)); and the appropriate FAA airway facilities (sector or regional).

A. *Flight Standards.*

(1) *Controlling Region—Flight Procedures Branch.* This office will coordinate the evaluation of the SMGCS plan to determine applicability to the criteria set forth in existing FAA orders and AC’s (including AC 120-57), and monitor adherence to the plan under its purview through the appropriate FSDO.

(2) *Flight Standards District Office.* This office will ensure that air carriers operating during periods of low visibility at airports requiring an SMGCS are addressing appropriate items in the SMGCS plan through inclusion in operations manuals and appropriate training programs. Required operations information will include flightcrew information and airport low visibility taxi route chart guidance. The FSDO shall monitor adherence to SMGCS and its plan by the airport and air carriers operating at the airport. The FSDO shall also advise the regional Flight Procedures Branch of any deviations or deficiencies.

(3) *Principal Operations Inspectors (POI) of FAR Parts 121, 125, 129, and 135 Operators.* POI’s are required to take four actions. The accomplishment of each of these actions should be recorded under the Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem (PTRS) activity number 1380, and “SMGCS” should be placed in the “National Use” block. The four required actions are as follows:

- Bring to the attention of assigned operators the information contained in this chapter

- Ensure that operators are training flight crewmembers about the information/guidance contained in the SMGCS plan
- Ensure that each operator has provided flight crewmembers with adequate procedures for compliance with low visibility taxi requirements
- Determine through an operational control inspection or other means that the operator has acceptable procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of all required flight information to flight crewmembers

(4) *Headquarters.* The Technical Programs Division (AFS-400) shall be the final approving

authority for all SMGCS plans and shall review evaluation reports to determine the appropriateness of authorizing low visibility operations.

B. Air Traffic Control. ATC shall adhere to those sections of the SMGCS plan that are under its control. Deficiencies observed or brought to its attention should be corrected.

C. Airport Office (District or Regional). This office shall review the sections of the SMGCS plan for which it is responsible and notify the appropriate organization(s) of any deficiencies through the evaluation report.

1784.-1794. RESERVED.

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