Subject: LED Lighting at Airfields

Background/Discussion:

In 2007, LED-based lighting began to replace traditional incandescent lighting at both US and foreign airports. This changeover to LED systems will continue as market forces drive manufacturers to producing only LED lighting. Traditional manufacturers no longer produce suitable incandescent lamps. This change to LED lighting can affect operators who rely on EFVS for low visibility approaches, as EFVS technologies do not always detect LED-based lighting. Discussion with the FAA and various flight departments who use EFVS, as well as many who do not, have shown the need for operators to know whether the airfield they are flying into has LED-based lighting on the field prior to departure. This LED replacement situation does not currently affect any approach lighting systems (ALS), as there are no LED-based approach lighting systems operating within the National Airspace System (NAS).

Several operators have asked Flight Standards to identify LED lighting at airfields in the NAS. The LEDs on a field that would have the greatest effect on an EFVS user would be LED HIRLs (of which there are few) and LED Approach Lights (of which there are none).

Recommendations:

Flight Standards is proposing a change to the Terminal Procedures Publication (TPP) to identify the presence of LED lighting on airfields with emphasis on High Intensity Runway Lighting (HIRLs) as well as identifying any ALS’ with LEDs if and when they are adopted.

These changes will also be addressed in the AIM, IPH, Chart Supplement, Chart User’s Guide and possibly the AIP.

Several options will be presented and be open for discussion/comments.

Comments:

Submitted by: Matt Harmon
Organization: FAA/AFS-410 (FOG-A)
Phone: 202-267-9838
E-mail: Matthew.K.Harmon@faa.gov
Date: March 21, 2019
Matt Harmon, FAA/AFS-410, briefed the new topic and provided a brief history on issues associated with the use of Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting at airports. Matt explained that most incandescent lamp suppliers have been forced to become LED suppliers so the FAA has no choice but to change Runway Lighting and Approach Lighting Systems (ALS) to LEDs. He said there are currently no certified LED ALSs in the National Airspace System (NAS) though there are a number of High Intensity Runway Edge Lighting (HIRL) systems in place and users of Enhanced Flight Vision Systems (EFVS) have requested they be identified. In the near future, in addition to runway edge lighting systems, it is expected that ALS will also begin being installed with LEDs.

In order to increase awareness of LED lighting, Matt is recommending that the FAA modify the lighting symbols on Instrument Approach Procedure (IAP) charts to identify the presence of LEDs. He suggested adding an “L” to denote the presence of LED lighting, or modifying the symbol used on the chart (See Slides 4-6). He also recommends that a note be added to the airport remarks in Chart Supplement entries to indicate that LED lighting is in use (See Slide #7). He understands that updates to pilot guidance in the Instrument Procedure Handbook (IPH), Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM), and Chart User’s Guide will also have to follow.

Michael Stromberg, UPS, commented that because LED lights are not visible when using EFVSs, there have been experiments done adding Infrared signatures to LED systems, but he understands that is very expensive. Michael then asked if there could be a mix of LED and incandescent lighting at an airport. Matt said there would not be both types of lighting used in a single lighting system, but that there could be both LED and incandescent systems at a given airport.

Gary McMullen, Southwest Airlines, expressed concern that LED lights are overly bright. Matt responded that his office is aware of that problem and the intensity has been lowered at some locations. He recommended that pilots file complaints for lights that are too bright.

The question arose whether LEDs will be used for Runway Touchdown Zone or Centerline Lighting systems. Chris Hope, FAA/AFS-410, said that as the runway edge lights are tied to procedure minima, they are looking into that first. Rich Boll, NBAA, said that they would like to see all LED lighting identified, including touchdown zone lighting. Juergen Kuhnenn, Lido, said that Lido supports the identification of LED lighting, but they would like more details on the impacts. He asked about minima credits depending on the type of runway lighting. Chris responded that minima credit is yet to be determined and that currently the focus is on impacts for flight planning.

Valerie Watson, FAA/AJV-A250, noted strong consensus of the audience for publishing the existence of LED lighting systems. She stated that, in the past, the charting offices could not pursue the publication of LED lighting systems because there was not a
source for the data. She suggested working with the FAA Office of Airports to collect this data is the first step. Chris said his office is working with the Office Airports and are working toward getting this information added to FAA Form 5010, Airport Master Record. She stated that once a reliable source for LED lighting system locations is established, the charting offices will investigate the best way to communicate this information to users.

**STATUS: OPEN**

**ACTION:** Matthew Harmon, FAA/AFS-410, will continue to work with the Office of Airports to secure a source for the LED data.

---

**MEETING 19-02**

Joe Lintzenich, FAA/AFS-410, Contract Support, provided an update. He stated that the Flight Operations Group is continuing to work with the Office Airports to get LED lighting systems added to FAA Form 5010, Airport Master Record. Once a reliable source for LED lighting system locations is established, then the charting offices will investigate the best way to communicate this information to users.

**STATUS: OPEN**

**ACTION:** Joe Lintzenich, FAA/AFS-410, Contract Support, will continue to work with the Office of Airports, FAA/AAS-100, to secure a source for the LED data.