



Federal Aviation Administration

National Part 139 Cert Alert

****Advisory**Cautionary**Non-Directive**Advisory**Cautionary**Non-Directive**Advisory**Cautionary**Non-Directive****

Date: 07/08/2025 **No. 25-02**

To: All Title 14 CFR Part 139 Airport Operators

Subject: Clarifications Regarding Restrictive Use Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs)

Point of Contact: Birke Rhodes, AAS-300, 202-267-8027
Email: birkely.m.rhodes@faa.gov

1. Purpose.

This CertAlert updates and replaces previous guidance on the use of restrictive use NOTAMs, which have, in some cases, been improperly applied by airport operators. It reinforces the need for justified, coordinated issuance of such NOTAMs and underscores the obligation of Federally obligated airports to maintain reasonable, non-discriminatory access in accordance with Federal grant assurances.

Restrictive NOTAMs should only be used to temporarily limit access to airport facilities for safety-critical reasons (e.g., unsafe conditions, construction, temporary service outages).

2. Background.

Restrictive use NOTAMs have been issued by airport operators in response to Irregular Operations (IROPS) events caused by severe weather, disaster recovery, airport construction or sometimes due to capacity, staffing or service constraints at the airport. While these challenges are real, non-safety constraints can introduce safety risks, especially for divert flights if restrictive NOTAMs are issued without clear justification.

To clarify how grant assurances apply in these scenarios, a joint letter from FAA Office of Airport Safety & Standards and Office of Airport Compliance is attached. Airport operators and entities should read this letter to gain a clearer understanding of the full impact a restrictive NOTAM can have on safety in the NAS.

If there are no aviation safety impacts, the airport's primary course of action should be to issue a NOTAM detailing specific constraints at the facility. This allows users to make informed decisions, such as if fuel service is limited, customs services are not provided, or terminal gate capacity has been exceeded. Airport operators must coordinate in advance with users and ensure NOTAMs are timely, accurate, and necessary. Complete closures should only be issued when the airport cannot safely accommodate any additional operations.

3. Action.

In the instances where airports need to communicate specific constraints, via a NOTAM, certificated airport operators using the NOTAM system must reference [FAA Order JO 7340.2N - Contractions \(faa.gov\)](#) for the proper use of standardized abbreviations and terminology. Consistency in language supports national system clarity and minimizes the risk of misinterpretation by NOTAM users.

Key elements that should be included in NOTAMs communicating airport constraints are:

- Clearly identify the airport facilities to which the restrictions apply.
- The types of aircraft operations that are impacted. Use of terminology provided in [FAA Order JO 7340.2N - Contractions \(faa.gov\)](#) is particularly important for this element. Certain terms such as “scheduled” and “unscheduled” have specific definitions per 14 CFR Part 139 and should be avoided or used with caution to avoid confusion among NOTAM users.
- Include contact information at which representatives will be available for further information/coordination.

While variations in conditions and scenarios may exist, the use of clear, standardized terminology is critical. The example below illustrates recommended NOTAM language for international air carriers considering diverting to this airport.

Example:

AP CUST PROCESSING DLA DUE TO CAPACITY, INTL CARRIERS MAY EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT DLA IN CLEARING CUST, CTC AP MANAGEMENT AT XXX-XXX-XXXX

Translations:

Airport Customs processing is delayed due to capacity, international carriers may experience significant delays in clearing customs, contact airport management at XXX-XXX-XXXX for further information.

*Note: The above example was filed via Free Form.

Timely and prompt coordination with the relevant Air Traffic Facility cannot be overemphasized. It is critical for Air Traffic to have prior involvement in discussions with the airport when and if ground capacity issues arise.

[ACRP Report 65](#): Guidebook for Irregular Operations (IROPS) Contingency Planning is a recommended resource for materials related to development/updating of IROPS plans. It recommends regular review, update, and training of personnel on IROPS planning.



Birke Rhodes, Manager
Airport Safety and Operations Division, AAS-300

7/08/2025
Date



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of Airport Compliance
and Management Analysis

800 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

July 8, 2025

Dear Airport Sponsor,

For immediate attention. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) previously issued a Cert Alert on Restrictive Use Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) on December 26, 2024. That Cert Alert was prompted because there appears to be an increase in the number of such NOTAMs being issued, which has raised operational concerns among airports, airlines and other users. Recognizing that diversions may increase during the summer convective season, the FAA seeks to again highlight the appropriate use and coordination of such NOTAMs. In the coming weeks, the agency will convene a cross-section of industry representatives to further address this growing concern.

This letter serves to remind airport sponsors concerning the potential overuse or misuse of NOTAMs that can introduce safety risks to the National Airspace System or compliance risk to the airport sponsor. This is not a new policy. Rather, it is an effort to clarify existing airport sponsor responsibilities to balance airfield safety with reasonable access consistent with the applicable federal obligations.

As an example, on several recent occasions, airport sponsors or operators have issued NOTAMs closing their airport or restricting air carrier operations when ramp parking, gate parking, terminal capacity, or other potentially non-safety-related airport limitations arise, usually because of inclement weather, without a safety reason. In some cases, airport sponsors or operators preemptively closed or restricted operations in advance of conditions anticipating a diminished ability to provide support to specific types of aircraft, deficiencies in handling or processing passengers held onboard aircraft, or to manage certain ground support operations. Such preemptive closures or restrictions may be inappropriate. They have a direct impact on the air carrier flight planning processes during irregular operations and reduce their ability to manage operational safety. Air carriers highlighted the challenge this causes when trying to assess or identify a diversion or alternate airport during weather events. In some cases, viable options from a flight safety perspective have been removed because the airport may have preemptively restricted access without bona fide justification or advanced coordination.

Grant Assurance 19, *Operation and Maintenance*, requires a federally obligated airport and its facilities to be operated at all times in a safe and serviceable condition and restrict actions that would interfere with the use of the airport as intended. The airport sponsor must also promptly notify users of any condition affecting aeronautical use, with safety-related conditions being a priority. If any part of the airport is closed or hazardous, the sponsor must provide warnings to users, such as issuing a NOTAM.

Grant Assurance 22, *Economic Nondiscrimination*, requires an airport sponsor to make the airport available on reasonable terms and without unjust discrimination to all types, kinds, and classes of aeronautical activities. This obligation provides for airport-specific safety considerations, which may require specific conditions, restrictions, or actions to ensure safe operations. While the sponsor has the right and obligation to make determinations of a temporary nature specific to the circumstances at its airport, these should be infrequent and only associated with irregular operations or events that would require such determinations. The FAA supports an airport sponsor's interest in carrying out their responsibility to operate a safe airport, including during inclement weather. An airport sponsor must balance safety with reasonable terms and without unjust discrimination. Reasonable accommodation of aeronautical activities implies not introducing safety risks, minimizing operational impacts, and taking prompt action to restore access to the airport and its facilities as soon as possible. Defaulting to closure or restricting access for non-safety critical events should not be normalized or become a pattern.

In some cases, the issuance of a restrictive NOTAM may inadvertently introduce unsafe conditions or create safety risks that the airport sponsor did not anticipate or consider. Consistent with risk management principles, it is imperative to emphasize that the improper use of restrictive NOTAMs, for example, in mitigating airport ground limitations, cannot result in safety risks being transferred to airborne aircraft. For example, a NOTAM noting "CUST PROCESSING DLA DUE TO CAPACITY, INTL CARRIERS MAY EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT DLA IN CLEARING CUST," is the appropriate NOTAM versus stating that the "AP CLSD TO DIV INTL ACFT."

If required due to a safety condition, a NOTAM closing the airport or restricting access should be limited in duration. It is imperative to clearly communicate any unsafe condition, justifying the restriction. If a NOTAM is issued for other than safety reasons, such as for terminal, aircraft gate, or aircraft parking capacity limitations, then the NOTAM must be limited to those reasons, as opposed to closing or restricting access to the airport. The airport should also provide sufficient detail on the ground limitations which prompted the NOTAM, e.g., unavailability of gates, issues with deplaning passengers, terminal or aircraft parking saturation. This level of detail in turn would allow an operator, dispatcher, or Pilot in Command (PIC) to prepare and make the required operational and safety decisions consistent with applicable regulations (e.g., 14 CFR Part 121) and their operations specifications (Ops Specs), e.g., divert to another airport, hold, or decide whether to land or not.

The FAA acknowledges that from an operational standpoint, an airport sponsor may have to make decisions in real time to address an evolving situation. Thus, as soon as an airport determines it may need to issue a restrictive NOTAM, coordination with the airport users (e.g., air carriers) and the servicing FAA Air Traffic Facility needs to take place without delay.

Prompt coordination with the relevant Air Traffic Facility cannot be overemphasized. It is critical for Air Traffic to have prior involvement in discussions with the airport when ground capacity issues arise. Preemptive coordination prior to reaching ground capacity limitations and issuing a NOTAM supports structured Air Traffic flow control strategies. In some cases, additional collaboration protocols between local airport operations and Air Traffic regarding

terminal, aircraft gates, and aircraft parking capacity thresholds would reduce the likelihood of future restrictions, including abrupt closures or restrictions by NOTAM.

Do not assume it is permissible to close the airport to unscheduled diversions while allowing scheduled flights or General Aviation (GA) operations. Such a practice could constitute a violation of grant assurances 19 and 22 if there is no clear unsafe condition at the airport.

It is essential for an airport to develop or update its plans and consider incorporating contingencies for irregular operations. These can be useful in proactively providing appropriate on-airport mitigations to avoid transferring risk to aircraft operations. For example, considering what taxiways and ramps can be used to park overflow aircraft; what precautionary actions should be taken; staffing requirements; how to handle passengers in remote parking areas; and similar mitigations. The ACRP Report 65 *Guidebook for Airport Irregular Operations (IROPs) Contingency Planning* (2012) discusses contingency planning and different stakeholders' roles and can be a useful reference.¹ Equally important is for airports to consider updating or developing NOTAM issuance criteria, which could be coordinated with the FAA ahead of time.

We appreciate your attention to this critical safety matter and look forward to working collaboratively to ensure that, going forward, cautionary consideration is given for the issuance of a NOTAM restricting access to the airport.

Sincerely,



Patricia Hiatt, Director (A)
FAA Office of Airport Safety and Standards



Michael Helvey, Director
FAA Office of Airport Compliance and Management Analysis

¹ See [https://crp.trb.org/acrp0715/wp-content/themes/acrp-child/documents/051/original/ACRP_65_Guidebook_for_Airport_Irregular_Operations_\(IROPs\)_Contingency_Planning.pdf](https://crp.trb.org/acrp0715/wp-content/themes/acrp-child/documents/051/original/ACRP_65_Guidebook_for_Airport_Irregular_Operations_(IROPs)_Contingency_Planning.pdf).