



Vanquishing the V/PD

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Safety Section

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This publication is directed primarily towards airport management to be disseminated to all levels of personnel working at your airfield. Vanquishing the V/PD can be accomplished through a solid partnership between the FAA and airport management. The responsibility of making sure that the proper safeguards are in place; however, lies squarely on the shoulders of airport management. Please use this information and all that follows as a guide by which to produce a safer environment at your airfield.

A thorough driver training program is a good driver training program. But a balanced driver training program, however, is an effective driver training program. A thorough driver training program includes a wide variety of topics that are covered in detail. The information presented is accurate and up to date. A balanced driver training program, however, means that important concepts are taught, emphasized and reinforced. Comprehending important concepts is often more practical than mastering esoteric information.

A few important concepts warranting emphasis and reinforcement that will keep you safe on or about the runway environment are:

- **The Runway is Sacred Territory.** Perhaps the most important concept in a balanced driver training program. When drivers understand the concept that the runway environment must be treated in an inviolate manner because of the disastrous effects of carelessness, fewer runway incursions will occur.
- **Specific Runway Clearances.** Pilots and vehicle drivers alike routinely become involved in runway incursions because they do not understand that most runway clearances are very specific in nature. A specific clearance will include your call sign and a specific clearance to enter a specific runway. If you are driving an operations vehicle the specific clearance will be "Airport 1, proceed on Runway

26R.” The language of the clearance is unmistakable. If you report holding short of a runway and the ATCT replies “Roger”, the word “Roger” is **not** an implied clearance to enter the runway. In this case “Roger” means that the ATCT has received your last transmission. It is **not** a clearance of any kind. Likewise, if the ATCT replies “Expect two minutes” this is **not** a clearance to enter the runway for a period of two minutes. It means expect requested clearance in two minutes.

- **Non-specific Runway Clearances.** Occasionally, the ATCT may issue the vehicle a non-specific clearance to enter the runway. For example, if you are holding short for a runway inspection and your transmission to the ATCT is “International Tower, Airport 1 at taxiway B8, request inspection of Runway 26R.” Your clearance might be “Airport 1, proceed as requested.” The clearance is non-specific in wording only but specific relating to your request.
- **When in doubt, don’t go out.** This precautionary practice is an invaluable safety net when operating on or about the runway environment. If you question a clearance, a condition, a situation, a transmission or have an intuition, hold your position and do not enter the runway. The world will not come to an end if you hold your position and decline your clearance to enter the runway environment. You have elected to engage on the side of caution and no one can fault you for that.
- **Expectation Bias.** We often hear what we want to hear. Unfortunately, it is very common for a pilot or a vehicle driver to receive instructions to hold short of a runway, read back the instructions to hold short of the runway, and then enter the runway. This so called “assumption mistake” occurs when a pilot or vehicle driver is not engaged in active listening. When driving on the airfield, particularly on or near the runway environment, listen carefully. Do not assume that a clearance is exactly what you expected or wanted to hear.

Your driver training program can be so thorough that it becomes ineffective. Teaching drivers the nuances of the ILS Critical Area marking makes no sense if drivers are not taught the basic principles of the Runway Holding Position marking. Review your driver training program and make sure that the important concepts are taught, emphasized and reinforced.

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