

ORDER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

AL 7950.2A

ALASKAN REGION

February 8, 1993

SUBJ: RUNWAY VISIBILITY OBSERVATION PROGRAM

1. **PURPOSE.** This order provides for the continuation of the Runway Visibility Observation Program within the Alaskan Region. It changes who is eligible to participate in the program and details approval requirements, and extends the program to airports with an operating AWOS/ASOS and SAWRS or with observers trained to a Supplemental Aviation Weather Reporting Station (SAWRS) level of competency.
2. **DISTRIBUTION.** This order is distributed to branch level in the Air Traffic and Flight Standards Divisions and to all Air Traffic and Flight Standards field offices and facilities.
3. **CANCELLATION.** AL 7950.2, Runway Visibility Observation Program, dated July 27, 1992, is canceled.
4. **DISCUSSION.** The Runway Visibility Observation Program continues to fill a need at selected terminals in Alaska where RVV/RVR information is not available. This program allows an instrument arrival/departure (takeoff/landing) the advantage of using runway observer visibility values when prevailing visibility or Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS)/Automated Surface Observing Station (ASOS) visibility would preclude such operation. Runway visibility, as used within the guidelines of this order, is applicable only for the particular runway at which the observation is taken, and is for the sole use of the operator providing the observation. When visibility is the governing factor in determining whether or not an SVFR clearance is necessary for control zone operation, prevailing-AWOS/ASOS visibility shall be used. SVFR clearances are not issued on the basis of runway visibility observer reports.
5. **RESPONSIBILITY.** Flight Standards district offices are delegated the responsibility for determining eligibility and executing letters of agreement with operators. All agreements executed, authorizing the use of a designated runway observer at a particular location to take and disseminate runway visibility observations for sole use of an operator, will be maintained within the appropriate Flight Standards district office which executes the agreement.
6. **ELIGIBILITY.** Persons eligible are certified SAWRS observers or observers trained at the SAWRS level of competency, located at FSS, tower, or AWOS/ASOS locations.
7. **ESTABLISHING ELIGIBILITY.** Sponsors of a certified designated runway visibility observer shall execute a letter of agreement, as specified in Appendix 1, with the appropriate Flight Standards field office.
8. **EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS.** The requesting agency/operator shall furnish all necessary equipment. As a minimum the following shall be provided:
 - a. Transportation to runway end locations.
 - b. At FSS and tower locations, two-way radio equipment between observer and FSS or tower. Where available, ground control frequency 121.9 MHz shall be used.

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c. At AWOS/ASOS-only locations, two-way radio equipment between observer and SAWRS or the aircraft.

9. OBSERVING PROCEDURES.

a. All reported observations must be recorded, showing visibility and time. Observation records may be destroyed when 15 days old, except where part of an accident/incident package.

b. At FSS or tower locations, all runway visibility observations must be reported as soon as possible to the facility.

c. Visibility shall be reported in statute miles or fractions thereof.

d. Runway light status used during a runway visibility observation (i.e., on or off) should remain the same throughout an arrival or departure (takeoff/landing).

e. Visibility observations are current only while the observer is on the airport and able to contact company aircraft via a discrete frequency.

f. Runway visibility observations made under this program are for the sole use of the operator, and shall not be transmitted as part of the airport weather observation.

Jacqueline L. Smith
Regional Administrator

APPENDIX 1. SAMPLE LETTER OF AGREEMENT FOR OPERATORS

Letter of Agreement between
_____(FSDO)
and
_____(Operator)
_____(Airport)

Subject: Runway Visibility Observer Program.

1. Purpose. This letter defines the responsibilities of both parties as joint participants in the Runway Visibility Observation Program.

2. Scope. This Letter of Agreement is supplementary to Alaskan Region Order

AL 7950.2A and is valid only for the purpose of taking runway visibility observations to be utilized by flight crews of the above named operator.

3. Procedures. The operator shall:

a. Develop and attach to this agreement a runway light/statute mile conversion chart for observers (i.e., 3 runway lights = 1/8 statute mile) for each runway where observations will be made. Standard runway Visibility Observation Values (RVO) are as follows:

- RVO 1600' 1/4 sm vis
- RVO 2400' 1/2 sm vis
- RVO 3200' 5/8 sm vis
- RVO 4000' 3/4 sm vis
- RVO 4500' 7/8 sm vis
- RVO 5000' 1 sm vis
- RVO 6000' 1 1/4 sm vis

b. Provide transportation to/from point of observation.

c. Provide two-way communication equipment between the observer and the aircraft.

d. Record all observations on a locally provided form, showing date, time, runway, visibility, and observer initials, and retain for 15 days. Observations may be destroyed after 15 days.

4. General.

a. Visibility reported to the aircraft by the observer shall be in statute miles or fraction thereof.

b. Visibility observations are current only while the observer is on the airport and able to contact company aircraft via a discrete frequency.

Operator

Facility or FSDO Manager

Attachment:
Runway Light/Statute Mile Conversion Chart