

TUS Airfield Changes

The Tucson Airport Authority (TAA), certificated operator of Tucson International Airport (TUS), is engaged in a multi-year \$400+ million Airfield Safety Enhancement (ASE) Program, a project that will transform the airfield layout at TUS to meet current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety standards. This project, designed to enhance airfield safety, will include the demolition of an existing runway (RWY 11R/29L; 75' x 8,000') with a new, relocated parallel runway (150' x 11,000') that will serve the Southern Arizona region for decades into the future.

Before construction of the new runway can begin, the current runway (11R/29L), primarily used by general aviation aircraft, must be closed and demolished. This phase of the ASE Program timeline is scheduled to begin on November 30, 2023. The work is expected to take approximately 2 years to complete, and the new runway is not anticipated to open until 2026. Additionally, once RWY 11R/29L closes, the runway numbers will be updated to reflect the current magnetic declination of the earth's poles. Runway 11L/29R will be renumbered to RWY 12/30 and the crosswind runway, RWY 3/21 will be renumbered to RWY 4/22 (this shift happens at nearly every airport at some point, usually taking place about once every 30 years as magnetic variation occurs). In approximately 2 years, after the new parallel runway is opened, the parallel runways will be updated to include the "L" (left) and "R" (right) designation.

In the days prior to November 30, 2023, and on that day, the TAA will change all the signs and markings on the airfield to denote the new numbering. You are advised to check the NOTAMs and listen to ATIS for closed surfaces as the construction crews perform painting. All the approaches will be updated to reflect the new numbering.

The closure of RWY 11R/29L will not affect commercial air service or military operations at TUS. However, it will reduce the capacity of TUS, which may result in a reduction of Air Traffic Control services that general aviation pilots have traditionally relied on, like practice approaches, taxi backs, and touch-and-go landings. Pilots and training schools planning to practice these maneuvers are highly encouraged to use Ryan Airfield (RYN) for these activities.

RYN has three runways; the main runway, 6R/24L, is 5503' x 75' and has ILS, RNAV, and NDB approaches. There is a similar length parallel runway 6L/24R and a crosswind runway 15/33. The RYN Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT), managed by Serco as part of the FAA Federal Contract Tower Program, is operational between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. daily.

TUS is an airport that is recognized for its convenience and customer service, which is why the TAA understands the challenge this change to runway capacity presents to the general aviation community of Southern Arizona. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we enhance safety and improve the TUS airfield for the benefit of our entire region.

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