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InFO

Information for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

SUBJECT: Approach Preparation: Preparing for an Instrument Approach as Backup in Night VMC or Whenever IMC May Be Encountered

Purpose:

A. This InFO was created to encourage the practice of preparing for an instrument approach as a backup during operation in night visual meteorological conditions (VMC), or whenever instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) might be encountered. It also recommends that this practice be explicitly included and emphasized among the standard operating procedures (SOPs) developed by air carrier certificate holders for use by flightcrews in their training and operations. It has been developed in response to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) safety recommendation A-00-007 and supersedes Flight Standards Information Bulletin for Air Transportation (FSAT) 01-05.

Background:

A. An FAA review has revealed that better approach preparation might have prevented certain air carrier accidents and incidents.

B. In turn, the FAA recommends air carrier certificate holders ensure that those certificate holders' flightcrews conduct a full briefing for an instrument approach as a backup when a visual approach is planned in night VMC, or whenever IMC might be encountered.

C. In these conditions, if a visual approach must be abandoned, the additional approach preparation would provide for a smooth and safe transition to an instrument approach.

Recommended action: Directors of safety, directors of operations, training managers and pilots should be aware of the importance of standard operating procedures and, in particular, the importance of pilot briefings and descent planning for visual approaches. The following recommended practice should be included as SOP in the training program and in the manuals used by the operator's flightcrews:

Flightcrews should prepare for an instrument approach when a visual approach is planned in night VMC or whenever IMC might be encountered.

Approach Chart. Preparation should include having open and readily usable the best instrument approach chart, if one is published, in accordance with the operator's approved training program and operating procedures. A precision approach is the best selection; any approved approach providing precision-like vertical guidance to the pilot is a desirable second-choice selection, such as FMS with VNAV capability; any other approach is the least desirable selection.

Briefing. A briefing should be conducted that includes at least the following elements:

- **Frequency of the approach navaid**
- **Final approach course**
- **Glideslope (GS) altitude at GS intercept, or
Crossing altitude at the final approach fix (FAF)**
- **Decision altitude or height DA(H); or
Minimum descent altitude (MDA) and missed approach point (MAP)**
- **Initial heading and altitude for the missed approach procedure**

Navigation Radios. Preparation should include tuning and identifying approach nav aids, and setting the appropriate approach course.