



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

# SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

SAFO 17011  
DATE: 9/28/17

Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

**[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/safo](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo)**

*A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. SAFO content should be especially valuable to air carriers in meeting their statutory duty to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be as effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO.*

**Subject:** Runway Status Lights (RWSL)

**Purpose:** This SAFO serves to ensure that aircraft operators, pilots and airport personnel are aware of the installation, meaning, and use of RWSLs.

**Background:** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) developed RWSLs, which are a fully automated system to aid in preventing runway collisions. The RWSL system integrates airport lighting equipment with approach and surface surveillance radar systems to provide aircraft and vehicle crews a visual signal indicating when it is unsafe to enter/cross or begin/continue takeoff on the runway.

**Discussion:** There have been several instances at RWSL airports where flightcrews have ignored the illuminated red in-pavement RWSL lights when issued a clearance by Air Traffic Control (ATC). Illuminated RWSLs mean aircraft/vehicles stop or remain stopped and contact ATC for further direction, relaying to ATC that the RWSLs are illuminated. The RWSL system operates independently from ATC and controllers do not have any indication of when the RWSL lights are illuminated. Failure to comply with illuminated red in-pavement RWSL lights may result in a high risk collision Runway Incursion event.

**Recommended Action:** Chief Operating Officers, Directors of Operations, Directors of Safety, Directors of Training, Directors of Maintenance, and Chief Pilots should:

- Review aircraft and vehicle operator training and incorporate RWSL information and procedures as appropriate.
- Provide RWSL information and resources on use and location of RWSL installations to pilots and appropriate maintenance personnel, as well as other personnel involved in taxiing aircraft or operating vehicles within the Airport Movement Area.
- Incorporate RWSL use into training events and training programs to foster recognition of RWSL signals and standard procedures to follow, depending on the phase of aircraft or vehicle operation.

**RWSL Information Resources:**

- Runway Status Lights Program [http://www.faa.gov/air\\_traffic/technology/rwsl/](http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/technology/rwsl/)
- FAA Runway Safety [http://www.faa.gov/airports/runway\\_safety/](http://www.faa.gov/airports/runway_safety/)
- Publications: Aeronautical Information Manual-Lighting, AIP, NOTAMs, Jepp Charts, NACO Charts, LIDO Charts.

**Contact:** Questions or comments regarding this SAFO should be directed to the Air Carrier Operations Branch, AFS-220, at (202) 267-8166 or Commercial Operations Branch, AFS-820, at (202) 267-1100.