

Airports 101

Airport & Aviation Terminology

Airport Master Plan

An airport master plan is a comprehensive study of an airport and usually describes the short, medium, and long-term development plans to meet future aviation demand.

Aircraft Operation

The landing, takeoff or touch-and-go procedure by an aircraft on a runway at an airport.

Airport Improvement Program (AIP)

The AIP provides grants to public agencies, and in some cases, to private owners and entities, for the planning and development of public-use airports that are included in the NPIAS.

Airport Layout Plan (ALP)

A scaled drawing (or set of drawings), in either traditional or electronic form, of current and future airport facilities that provides a graphic representation of the existing and long-term development plan for the airport and demonstrates the preservation and continuity of safety, utility, and efficiency of the airport to the satisfaction of the FAA.

Airport Reference Code (ARC)

An ARC is a combination of the design aircraft's Aircraft Approach Category and Airplane Design Group. The ARC is used for planning and design only and does not limit the aircraft that may be able to operate safely on the airport.

Airport Reference Point (ARP)

The approximate geometric center of all usable runways at the airport.

Aircraft Approach Category (AAC)

A term used to specify a grouping of aircraft based upon approach speed in a landing configuration at their maximum certified landing weight.

Airplane Design Group (ADG)

A classification of aircraft based upon wingspan and tail height.

Based Aircraft

Based aircraft are those that have a lease either for storage facilities or space on a parking apron at the airport, for a majority of the year.

Building Restriction Line (BRL)

A notional line that identifies suitable and unsuitable locations for buildings on airports on the Airport Layout Plan.

Declared Distances

The distances the airport owner declares available for an aircraft's takeoff run, takeoff distance, accelerate-stop distance, and landing distance requirements. The distances are:

- Takeoff Run Available (TORA)
- Takeoff Distance Available (TODA)
- Accelerate-Stop Distance Available (ASDA)
- Landing Distance Available (LDA)

Design Aircraft / Critical Aircraft

An aircraft with characteristics that determine the application of airport design standards for a specific runway, taxiway, taxilane, apron, or other facility. This aircraft can be a specific aircraft model or a composite of several aircraft using, expected, or intended to use the airport or part of the airport. (Also called "critical aircraft" or "critical design aircraft.")

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Displaced Threshold

A threshold that is located at a point on the runway beyond the beginning of the runway.

Enplanement

The boarding of a passenger or unit of cargo, freight, and mail on an aircraft at an airport.

Fixed Base Operator (FBO)

A business enterprise located at an airport that provides services to pilots including aircraft rental, training, fueling, maintenance, parking, and the sale of pilot supplies.

General Aviation (GA)

All non-scheduled flights other than military conducted by non-commercial aircraft. General aviation covers local recreational flying to business transport that is not operating under the FAA regulations for commercial air carriers.

Hot Spot

A location on an airport movement area with a history of potential risk of collision or runway incursion, and where heightened attention by pilots and drivers is necessary.

Imaginary Surfaces

Described in Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 77 as established surfaces based on the runway that are used to identify objects that may impact airport plans or aircraft departure/arrival procedures or routes. There are five types of imaginary surfaces: horizontal, conical, primary, approach and transitional.

Instrument Approach Procedure (IAP)

A series of predetermined maneuvers for the orderly transfer of an aircraft under instrument flight conditions from the beginning of the initial approach to a landing or to a point from which a landing may be made visually. It is prescribed and approved for a specific airport by competent authority.

Itinerant Operations

Operations by aircraft that leaves the local airspace.

Large Aircraft

An aircraft with a maximum certificated takeoff weight of more than 12,500 lbs

Local Operations

Aircraft operations performed by aircraft that are based at the airport and that operate in the local traffic pattern or within sight of the airport, that are known to be departing for or arriving from flights in local practice areas within a prescribed distance from the airport, or that execute simulated instrument approaches at the airport.

Modification to Standards

Any approved nonconformance to FAA standards, other than dimensional standards for Runway Safety Areas (RSAs), applicable to an airport design, construction, or equipment procurement project that is necessary to accommodate an unusual local condition for a specific project on a case-by-case basis while maintaining an acceptable level of safety.

Movement Area

The runways, taxiways, and other areas of an airport that are used for taxiing or hover taxiing, air taxiing, takeoff, and landing of aircraft including helicopters and tilt-rotors, exclusive of loading aprons and aircraft parking areas

National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS)

The national airport system plan developed by the Secretary of Transportation on a biannual basis for the development of public use airports to meet national air transportation needs.

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National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

A U.S. Environmental law that promotes the enhancement of the environment. NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. Using the NEPA process, agencies evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of their proposed actions. Agencies also provide opportunities for public review and comment on those evaluations.

Navigational Aid (NAVAID)

Electronic and visual air navigation aids, lights, signs, and associated supporting equipment.

Object Free Area (OFA)

An area centered on the ground on a runway, taxiway, or taxiway centerline provided to enhance the safety of aircraft operations by remaining clear of objects, except for objects that need to be in the OFA for air navigation or aircraft ground maneuvering purposes.

Obstacle Free Zone (OFZ)

The OFZ is the three-dimensional airspace along the runway and extended runway centerline that is required to be clear of obstacles for protection for aircraft landing or taking off from the runway and for missed approaches.

Runway Safety Area (RSA)

Defined surface surrounding the runway prepared or suitable for reducing the risk of damage to aircraft in the event of an undershoot, overshoot, or excursion from the runway.

Runway Protection Zone (RPZ)

A trapezoidal area at ground level prior to the threshold or beyond the runway end to enhance the safety and protection of people and property on the ground.

Small Aircraft

An aircraft with a maximum certificated takeoff weight of 12,500 lbs or less.

Terminal Area Forecast (TAF)

The official forecast of aviation activity, both aircraft and enplanements, at FAA facilities. This includes FAA-towered airports, federally contracted towered airports, non-federal towered airports, and many non-towered airports.

Taxilane

A taxiway designed for low speed and precise taxiing. Taxilanes are usually, but not always, located outside the movement area, providing access from taxiways (usually an apron taxiway) to aircraft parking positions and other terminal areas.

Taxiway

A defined path established for the taxiing of aircraft from one part of an airport to another.

Taxiway Design Group (TDG)

A number classification of aircraft based upon the aircraft main gear width, and distance from the cockpit to the main gear.

Threshold

The beginning of that portion of the runway available for landing. In some instances, the threshold may be displaced. "Threshold" always refers to landing, not the start of takeoff.