



Civil Aviation Authority
SAFETY NOTICE
Number: SN-2026/003



Issued: 23 February 2026

Aircraft Diversions

This Safety Notice contains recommendations regarding operational safety.

Recipients must ensure that this Notice is copied to all members of their staff who need to take appropriate action or who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisations and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	Affected
Air Traffic:	Affected
Airspace:	Not Primarily Affected
Airworthiness:	Not Primarily Affected
Flight Operations:	All Operators Affected
Licensed/Unlicensed Personnel:	Not Primarily Affected

1 Introduction

The purpose of this Safety Notice is to remind aerodrome operators of their critical role in maintaining air safety during diversion scenarios and to encourage proactive engagement with stakeholders to ensure safe and efficient handling of such events.

2 Background

Diversions occur when aircraft cannot land at their planned destination due to adverse weather conditions, operational constraints, or other unforeseen circumstances. Refusal to accept a diversion can significantly increase the risk to flight safety, potentially leaving aircraft with limited options and fuel reserves, which may result in an emergency fuel priority landing situation.

3 Actions

Aerodrome operators Should:

3.1 Prioritise Safety

When a diversion request is received, the overriding consideration must be the safety of the aircraft, passengers, and crew. Aerodromes should accept diversions without a request response delay where the aerodromes infrastructure is designed to accept such aircraft.

3.2 Engage with Based Airline Operators and Ground Handling Agents

Establish clear communication channels and robust contingency plans with airlines and ground handling agents to support the accommodation of diverted flights, including those occurring at short notice. Airlines should be expected to maintain appropriate ground handling contracts at all aerodromes likely to be used as diversion alternates. However, the absence of such an arrangement should not justify refusal of a diversion. In such circumstances, the responsibility remains with the airline to resolve any ground handling shortfall, with the understanding that this may result in extended ground delays for passengers.

3.3 Review and Update Diversion Policies

Ensure that aerodrome procedures reflect a clear commitment to supporting all diversion requests, not solely those arising from emergency or safety-critical situations. This should include regular assessment of available parking stands, ground handling capacity, and passenger welfare arrangements to ensure that the aerodrome is prepared to accommodate diversions effectively and consistently.

3.4 Collaborate Where Capacity Is Limited

Where operational or spatial constraints limit normal stand availability, aerodromes should work proactively with stakeholders to identify and implement alternative solutions to enable acceptance. This may include the use of taxiway closures or other operational measures to create additional temporary parking capacity wherever it is safe and practicable to do so.

4 Aircraft Operator Actions

- 4.1 During extreme weather events, aircraft operators should ensure a realistic plan for possible multiple diversion scenarios.
- 4.2 The operator is responsible for the ground handling of the aircraft, and its passengers, once the safety related diversion has been accepted by the aerodrome. Operators should review their ground handling agreements to ensure that appropriate cover is in place at planned diversion aerodromes.

When a CAT operator uses flight monitoring or flight watch as functions of a system for exercising operational control,

- 4.3 When an operator uses Flight Monitoring or Flight Watch for operational control, it should be used to support operational engagement with aircraft, aerodromes and ground handling agents to proactively manage multiple diversion scenarios.

5 Safety Implications

- 5.1 Failure to accept diversions can lead to increased risk of fuel exhaustion, emergency landings, and compromised passenger safety. Aerodromes play a vital role in mitigating these risks by maintaining flexibility and readiness.

6 Regulatory Consultation

- 6.1 A public consultation will take place to consider the incorporation of these criteria into the aerodrome certification and licensing framework.

7 Queries

- 7.1 Any queries or requests for further guidance for this communication should be addressed to:

Aerodrome Policy
Civil Aviation Authority,
Aviation House,
Beehive Ring Road,
West Sussex, RH6 0YR

E-mail:- AD.PolicyConsultations@caa.co.uk

8 Cancellation

This Safety Notice will remain in force until further notice.