



# ALPA SAFETY ALERT

2017-02

## CAUTION ON USE OF RUNWAY STATUS LIGHTS

### Background

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a [Safety Alert for Operators \(SAFO\) 17011](#) on September 28, 2017, to ensure that aircraft operators, pilots and airport personnel are aware of the installation, meaning and use of Runway Status Lights (RWSLs). RWSLs are fully automated systems of red lights that are designed to aid in preventing runway incursions and ground collisions. The RWSL system integrates airport lighting equipment with approach and surface surveillance radar systems to provide aircraft and vehicle crews a visual cue indicating when it is unsafe to enter/cross or begin/continue takeoff on the runway.

According to the FAA, there have been several instances at airports equipped with RWSLs in which flight crews have failed to stop after receiving a clearance by Air Traffic Control while these red lights were lit. *Illuminated RWSLs mean that flight crews/vehicle operators must stop or remain stopped, immediately inform ATC that the RWSLs are lit, and request further directions.* The RWSL system operates independently and controllers do not have any indication when the lights are illuminated. Failure to comply with the instructions to stop when indicated by RWSLs may result in a high-risk collision event.

RWSLs are presently installed and operating at these locations: Orlando (MCO), Phoenix (PHX), Houston Intercontinental (IAH), Baltimore-Washington (BWI), Las Vegas (LAS), Charlotte-Douglas (CLT), Los Angeles (LAX), Seattle-Tacoma (SEA), Chicago O'Hare (ORD), Washington Dulles (IAD), LaGuardia (LGA), New York (JFK), Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP), Newark (EWR), Detroit (DTW), Ft. Lauderdale (FLL), and San Francisco (SFO).

### Recommendations:

1. Review RWSL guidance provided by your company, and by the FAA on the agency's [RWSL website](#).
2. Adhere to RWSL operating procedures and advise ATC if a clearance is received from the tower while the red lights are illuminated.

Any questions, please contact the ALPA Engineering and Air Safety Department at [eas@alpa.org](mailto:eas@alpa.org) or 1-800 424-2470.

Captain Steve Jangelis  
Aviation Safety Chairman