

Irregular Operations (IROPS)

Introduction

The Passenger Bill of Rights prohibits domestic flights from remaining on the tarmac for more than three hours. International flights may remain on the tarmac for four hours. Flights remaining on the tarmac longer than the aforementioned times, can result in significant fines levied on the Airport Operator and the Air Carrier. The Great Falls International Airport is prepared to provide for the safe and efficient processing of diverted aircraft while preserving the airport's operating environment for scheduled aircraft in the event of aircraft diversions or lengthy delays involving airline passengers under the following circumstances:

(1) GTF based Air Carriers

- (a) Airport Operations personnel will initiate response and coordinate planning upon notification of a lengthy ramp or taxiway delay by the airline ground service manager.

(2) Diverted Air Carriers

- (a) Airport Operations personnel will initiate response and coordinate planning upon notification of a lengthy ramp or taxiway delay by the Pilot In Command.
- (b) GTF Airport Security and Operations personnel will follow established procedures with TSA and US Customs and Border Patrol for diverted flights.

Definitions

- a. **GTF based Air Carriers.** Any Airline that has scheduled departures and arrivals at the Great Falls International Airport and has regular ground service support.
- b. **Diverted Air Carriers.** Any Airline that has no scheduled departures or arrivals that has landed at the Great Falls International Airport for any reason.

Purpose

The information contained in this hazard-specific section is intended to supplement the Basic Plan and Functional Section of the Airport Emergency Plan. It defines responsibilities and describes actions to be taken in the event an irregular operation which results in lengthy delays with passengers on board aircraft or in some cases, lengthy delays at the GTF terminal. Further, this document, in conjunction with the Basic Plan and Functional Section, forms the basis for elements to be included in functional Standard Operating Guides (SOGs) and Checklists.

Situation and Assumptions

- a. The Great Falls International Airport is a 24 hour/365 day operation.
- b. The FAA Air Traffic Control tower is a 24 hour/365 day operation.
- c. GTF has two operational runways for air carriers:
 - (1) Runway 3-21
 - (2) Runway 16-34
- d. GTF has the following daily operations:
 - (1) Air Carrier
 - (2) Cargo
 - (3) Commuter
 - (4) General Aviation
- e. The following is list of aircraft that normally arrive/depart GTF:
 - (1) CRJ – 50 passengers
 - (2) Embraer 175 – 76 passengers
 - (3) MD-80 – 150 passengers
 - (4) Bombardier Q400 – 80 passengers
 - (5) Boeing 757 – Cargo
 - (6) Airbus A-300 - Cargo
- f. GTF staffing:
 - (1) ARFF – provided by Montana Air National Guard, 24 hour/365 days
 - (2) Operations – provided by GTF Airport Authority, M-F 0800-1630
 - (3) Law Enforcement – provided by GTF Airport Authority M-F 0800-1630
 - (a) Augmented by Great Falls Police Department through MOU 24 hours/365 days
 - (4) Security – Contracted armed security with Securitas 24 hours/365 days

- g. GTF has the potential for IROPS events to occur resulting from extreme weather, geological events, aircraft mechanical problems, labor issues, or flight diversions.
- h. The GTF passenger terminal has five passenger loading and unloading gates that can be used for most any aircraft. The gate areas can be sterilized and secured at any time.
- i. There are approximately 25 daily arrivals and departures at GTF. This schedule allows for timely and flexible use of the passenger terminal.
- j. GTF has two fixed based operators on the airfield with equipment to assist in the deplaning of passengers, towing of aircraft, and other services.
 - (1) Front Range Aviation (On-call for after hours)
 - (2) Holman Aviation (24 hour/ 365 day operations)
 - (a) Holman Aviation has two mobile stair trucks:
 - (i) Large with a minimum height of 10' and maximum height of 18'-4"
 - (ii) Small with a minimum height of 6'-5" and maximum height of 14'-2"
- k. The GTF passenger terminal has a full service restaurant that can be requested to serve passengers during non-business hours.

Operations

- a. General Procedures
 - (1) The GTF Airport Security Officer shall be the Airport Incident Commander for Irregular Operations until relieved by another Airport Official. GTF Airport Security can be reached at 406-791-0223.
 - (2) GTF Airport Security will notify the GTF Public Safety Manager or designee, TSA, and Customs and Border Patrol (if an international flight).
 - (3) The Airport Incident Commander will notify Holman Aviation of the situation to include:
 - (a) parking area
 - (b) aircraft type for marshaling and appropriate stair truck
 - (c) request head set to communicate with the Aircraft once parked

- (4) The Airport Incident Commander will make contact with the Aircraft Pilot In Command as soon as possible after notification of a diversion or the possibility of an extended tarmac delay and coordinate a plan to deplane passengers as soon as possible.
- (5) All communications regarding impacted aircraft should be conducted using the Tail Number only to eliminate confusion.

(6) Parking Priorities

- (a) All diverted aircraft shall be initially assigned to the following parking areas in the following priorities:
 - a) Heavy Ramp
 - b) Fed Ex Ramp
 - c) Customs/DHS Ramp
- (b) The GTF passenger terminal is the preferred location for deplaning but because the Airport Authority is responsible for the overall operation of the airport and can now be fined, final gate assignments for aircraft are to be approved by the Airport Authority.
- (c) Diverted Aircraft may only be assigned to the Terminal Ramp if there is confirmation from the Aircraft Pilot In Command that there is a mechanic or flight crew member available to reposition the aircraft after it is deplaned. Towing of commercial aircraft requires either a flight crew member or a mechanic with permission from the Air Carrier.
- (d) Operational air craft will taxi to the terminal ramp and passengers can disembark via ground or jet bridge.
- (e) Disabled aircraft may be towed back to the terminal ramp or passengers deplaned and transported by the GTF 40 passenger bus to the terminal.

(i) A security inspection of the bus must be completed to maintain a Sterile Area for deplaning passengers.

b. Irregular Operations Classifications and Responses

(2) **GTF based Air Carrier** experiencing lengthy ramp or taxiway delay.

- (a) Notification from Air Carrier ground services Manager to GTF Security Officer of delay. This notification should take place no later than one hour after the delay start time.

(b) Contact with the Aircraft Pilot In Command will be made as soon as possible by the Airport Incident Commander. The Air Carrier ground services Manager, Aircraft Pilot In Command, and the Airport Incident Commander will coordinate a plan to deplane passengers as soon as possible.

(c) The Airport Incident Commander will notify TSA of the plan and ensure proper tracking and security of passengers is maintained.

(3) Diverted International or pre-cleared Air Carriers landing at GTF.

(a) The Air Traffic Control Tower will notify GTF Airport Security of all diverted flights landing at GTF to include originating location and scheduled final destination, type of aircraft, number of souls on board, and tail number.

(b) The GTF Security Officer will act as the Airport Incident Commander until relieved by another GTF Airport Official.

(c) Contact with the Aircraft Pilot In Command will be made as soon as possible by the Airport Incident Commander. The Airport Incident Commander will coordinate with Customs and Border Patrol and the Aircraft Pilot In Command to permit deplaning of passengers as soon as possible. Deplaning of passengers will be permitted only with Customs and Border Protection approval.

(4) Diverted Domestic Air Carriers landing at GTF.

(a) The Air Traffic Control Tower will notify GTF Airport Security of all diverted flights landing at GTF to include originating location and scheduled final destination, type of aircraft, number of souls on board, and tail number.

(b) The GTF Security Officer will act as the Airport Incident Commander until relieved by another GTF Airport Official.

(c) Contact with the Aircraft Pilot In Command will be made as soon as possible by the Airport Incident Commander. The Aircraft Pilot In Command and the Airport Incident Commander will coordinate a plan to deplane passengers as soon as possible in the event of extended ramp or taxiway delays in accordance with the procedures below:

(i) The Airport Incident Commander will notify TSA of the plan and ensure proper tracking and security of passengers is maintained.

Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

a. Aircraft Owner/Operator or Designated Representative.

(1) Many diversions occur during hours when the local station is not staffed. The Airport Authority asks each local manager to maintain frequent discussions with their

sponsor airline to determine what staffing levels are expected to report to the airport for diverted flights. Please note that it is unlikely that any diverted flight will be allowed to use an airport gate without local station staff present to operate the gate.

- (2) The Parent Airlines will not allow the FBO to reposition diverted flights without calling in a mechanic. Accordingly, diverted flights should only be brought to the terminal – IF A PILOT IS AVAILABLE AND WILLING TO REPOSITION THE FLIGHT OFF THE GATE unless there are no other flight operations scheduled at that gate. A verbal commitment is required before the airplane can be repositioned to the terminal. Please discuss with the flight crew if they have flight hours remaining to complete this operation.

Repositioning a diverted flight to a gate should not interfere with scheduled operations on that gate or another airlines gate. This results in further delay and the possibility of cancelling local flights due to crew timeouts, etc. Note that diverted flights that are not brought to the terminal can be de-boarded at the FBO and bused to the terminal. If a diverted flight is allowed to use a terminal gate, all urgency should be placed on unloading the flight and repositioning it off gate.

Once a diverted aircraft flight crew has left an aircraft at a gate, moving the airplane becomes difficult and costly. Delaying a scheduled flight compounds the operational difficulty and inconvenience to passengers and opens the airport up to liability under the Passenger Bill of Rights. Accordingly, the Airport Authority has a responsibility to review all delays caused by diverted airplanes with the Parent Airline.

- (3) Provide timely and pertinent information to GTF Airport Security for relay to the GTF Deputy Director of Operations and Public Safety Manager, to include:
 - (a) Number of persons on board.
 - (b) Estimated time until deplaning of passengers is needed.
- (4) Provide representation and participation in planning process with GTF Airport personnel and CBP (if required).
- (5) Make necessary notifications, to include the FAA, TSA, and CBP.
- (6) Arrange for appropriate passenger services to include:
 - (a) Coordinate with GTF Airport personnel, the transportation of passengers/crew members.
 - (b) Coordinate with GTF Airport personnel, adequate holding facilities for passengers/crew members.
 - (c) Provide food, commissary items, and telephone facilities, as needed.
 - (d) Coordinate with GTF Airport personnel, passenger/crew accountability and tracking.
 - (e) Provide hotel and/or other alternative travel arrangements for passengers.

- (7) Implement approved plan in compliance with the requirements established by the DOT for Air Carriers.

b. Air Traffic Control Tower

- (1) Notify GTF Airport Security of all diverted flights landing at GTF to include originating location and scheduled final destination, type of aircraft, number of souls on board, and tail number.
- (2) Control aircraft and ground vehicle operations on the airport in support of the deplaning of passengers should it take place on the movement area of the airfield. All communications regarding impacted aircraft should be conducted using the Tail Number only to eliminate confusion.
- (3) All diverted aircraft shall be initially assigned to the following parking areas in the following priorities:
 - (i) Heavy Ramp
 - (ii) Fed Ex Ramp
 - (iii) Customs/DHS Ramp
- (4) Aircraft requesting parking or repositioning at the Terminal Ramp should not be authorized without approval from the Airport Incident Commander.
- (5) Relay information from the Pilot In Charge to Airport Incident Commander.
- (6) Make appropriate FAA notifications.

c. Law Enforcement/Security

- (1) Initiate appropriate notifications to other Airport personnel.
- (2) Assume role of Airport Incident Commander until relieved by another Airport Official.
- (3) Provide scene support and security.
- (4) Secure all passenger holding areas.
- (5) Assist with/provide AOA access control and escort.
- (6) Ensure appropriate agencies (TSA, CBP, FBO's, Air Carriers) have been notified and are taking appropriate action.
- (7) Provide necessary and detailed documentation for event.

d. Airport Incident Commander

- (1) GTF shall take ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all diversions are deplaned by the time they have been onsite for three hours.
- (2) When three diverted aircraft have arrived at GTF, additional Airport staff should be called onsite to assist in ramp control.
- (3) When an aircraft has been on the tarmac for two hours, seek constant updates on status and have a definite deplaning plan in place.

e. Airport Director

- (1) Ensure collaborative planning is taking place with the Air Carrier and Airport personnel.
- (2) Provide necessary support with the affected Air Carrier to ensure passenger care.

f. Airport Deputy Director of Operations

- (1) Participate in the event plan and coordinate with Air Carrier to ensure passenger care.
- (2) Coordinate with other Airport tenants to provide necessary equipment and services as needed by the Air Carrier.
- (3) Coordinate and direct Airport Operations personnel to provide support services, as needed.
- (4) Monitor, and coordinate as required, other concurrent airport activities.

g. Airport Public Safety Manager

- (1) Ensure all appropriate notifications have been made, including:
 - (a) Airport Director
 - (b) Airport Deputy Director of Operations
 - (c) Representative of the affected aircraft owner/operator
 - (d) FAA
 - (e) TSA
- (2) Respond to the airport if there are three or more diversions simultaneously
- (3) Serve as the liaison between TSA, CBP, and Air Carrier to ensure proper handling of deplaned passengers.

- (4) Coordinate with the Airport Deputy Director of Operations to designate hangars or other key buildings on the airport that could be used for passenger holding areas.

h. Airport Administration

- (1) Provide Air Carrier assistance with coordination with other Airport tenants if requested by the Air Carrier.
- (2) Provide Air Carrier administrative support if needed.
- (3) Provide tracking of expenses for potential reimbursement.

i. Airport Operations/Maintenance

- (1) Assist/provide critical services, including transportation of passengers from aircraft to holding areas, as needed.
- (2) Provide sanitation services for extended operations.
- (3) Assist in the provision of required resources.
- (4) To the extent possible, arrange to have available the following equipment/supplies/services:
 - (a) Portable lavatories.
 - (b) Drinking water.
 - (c) Ropes, barricades, barrier tape, etc. needed for securing passenger holding areas.

g. Other Airport Tenants

- (1) Coordinate all activities impacting the Irregular Operation with the Airport Incident Commander.
- (2) Continue to provide services based upon conditions.
- (3) Provide resources to assist in the event response to the extent possible.
 - (a) Holman Aviation
 - (i) The Airport Authority hopes to contain most diverted flights on the Heavy Ramp to maximize operational flexibility. If Holman is asked to reposition a diverted aircraft to a gate, please ensure the flight crew will stay onboard to remove the aircraft from the gate and coordinate with the Airport Incident Commander.

- (ii) Holman Aviation may suggest that the diverted aircraft use the central terminal position between gates two and three to offload, but this aircraft should still be repositioned off the Terminal Ramp as soon as possible.
- (iii) Holman Aviation may use the Airport Authority bus at any time transport passengers from the Heavy Ramp. This is a preferred operation to moving an aircraft to a vacant gate unless the crew agrees to reposition said aircraft off the terminal ramp. Please remember that a security inspection of the bus must be completed by GTF Airport Security to maintain a Sterile Area for deplaning passengers.
- (iv) Once a flight has been on the ground for 2.5 hours, the Airport Authority requests that Holman allow passengers to be de-boarded into the FBO until they can be bused to the terminal. **Passengers will not be considered Sterile and cannot re-board without TSA screening.**
- (v) Once four diverted aircraft are on the ground at GTF, the Airport requests that Holman call in a mechanic to assist in moving aircraft. The Airport Authority will fund this cost if services are not used.

Administration and Logistics

The Great Falls International Airport will respond to assist Air Carriers with extended ramp and taxiway delays.

GTF has the ability to provide coordination between Federal agencies, vendors, and other Airport tenants to ensure the accommodation of passenger needs during IROP events.

Plan Development and Maintenance

Annual review of the Irregular Operations (IROPS) section, in addition to plan development and maintenance, is the responsibility of the Airport Director or designee.

Reference and Authorities