



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

SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

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Flight Standards Service
Washington, DC

http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo

A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be as effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Subject: Review and/or Revision of Aircraft Towing/Ground Handling Procedures for the Safety of the Wing and/or Tail Walkers.

Purpose: This SAFO informs aircraft operators under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Parts 91, 91 subpart K (Part 91K), 121, 125, 129, and 135 about the importance of personnel remaining clear of an aircraft in tow until after it has come to a complete stop and chocks are installed. This SAFO also informs aircraft operators about marshalling of aircraft. This SAFO also recommends those operators review their procedures to ensure they include information regarding these topics. This information is applicable to all operators under 14 CFR that either tow aircraft or have procedures for towing, ground handling, servicing or marshalling aircraft.

Background: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is aware of multiple events where injuries or fatal injuries have occurred during aircraft towing or ground handling operations.

1. In one event, a wing walker sustained serious injury when an aircraft in tow was being repositioned. While the tow driver was moving the aircraft back to correct the aircraft position, the wing walker was removing the main landing gear safety pins. This led to the wing walker being struck by the trailing edge flaps of the aircraft being towed. As a result, the wing walker was run over by the aircraft's #3 and #4 main landing gear wheels.
2. In another event, a ramp agent was fatally injured when the ramp agent approached the aircraft while the #2 (right) engine was still running. The flight was operated with an inoperative auxiliary power unit and the aircraft arrived at the gate with the #2 engine running for the required two-minute engine cool down. After stopping the aircraft and setting the parking brake, the captain gave the hand signal to connect the airplane to ground power. However, one ramp agent had already proceeded to open the forward cargo bay resulting in the fatal engine ingestion accident.

While both of these incidents have not been proven to be a systemic issue, the severity of outcome warrants this safety reminder.

Discussion: The recommended actions below have been incorporated in the current edition of Advisory Circular (AC) 00-65, Towbar and Towbarless Movement of Aircraft and will be incorporated into AC 00-34, Aircraft Ground Handling, Servicing, and Marshalling.

Recommended Action: Operators should use their Safety Management System (SMS) (14 CFR part 5), or a similar safety risk management and safety assurance process, to evaluate its towing and marshalling procedures to ensure:

1. The procedures require installation of chocks whenever an aircraft towing operation has been stopped, either temporarily or when the aircraft being towed is parked at the intended location of parking.
2. The procedures require all personnel to remain clear of the aircraft in tow until the aircraft has come to a complete stop.
3. The procedures require that activities commence only after chocks are installed.
4. The procedures require all personnel to remain clear of operating engines until they are shut down.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this SAFO should be directed to the Aircraft Maintenance Division via email at 9-AWA-AFS-300-Correspondence@faa.gov, or via telephone at (202) 267-1675.