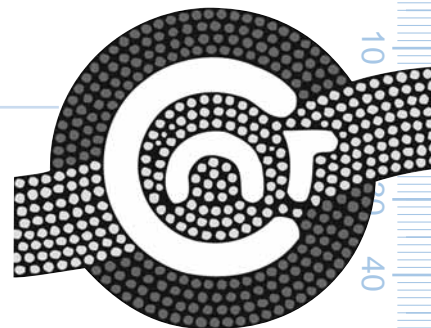


## Basic community airstrip inspections



*Beware of aircraft propellers they are not always visible.*

Many remote areas of Australia are reliant on air transportation. Air transportation plays a vital role in remote areas in relation to mail services, emergency medical provision, delivery of food and personal travel options. In many cases, air travel is the only transportation for small remote communities. It is therefore essential that airstrips are inspected routinely.

Some of the main problems with community airstrips are associated with their design, placement, ease of access and lack of maintenance to runways or hardware (e.g. marker cones, windsocks, lighting). Communities with airstrips have a duty of care to ensure that the airstrip is maintained to a safe standard and inspected on a regular basis.

### How often should it be inspected?

Airstrips should be inspected daily or at least prior to the arrival of aircrafts. It is particularly important to check airstrips after rain or extended dry periods.

### Who should do it?

Ideally, one person in the community should be responsible for the inspections. These people are known as the Airstrip Reporting Officer and should undergo training from Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). Communities might also consider having a backup person in case of absences.

### What training does the Airstrip Reporting Officer require?

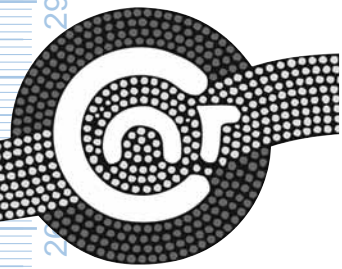
Under "Duty of Care" aerodrome operators should gain "Reporting Officer" accreditation – information can be gained from the CASA, contact 03 9859 9487.

### What issues can put aviators and their passengers at risk?

There are many issues that can put aircraft safety at risk. Some of the most common issues that particularly relate to community airstrips are listed below.

- Poorly maintained, rough or boggy runways
- Poorly marked airstrips
- Obstructions on the airstrip, including termite mounds, vegetation and rocks
- People or vehicles entering the runway without checking the sky for aircraft
- People or animals approaching the aircraft before the aircraft and propeller are stationary
- People smoking within 50 m of an aircraft
- Birds, animals and livestock on or near the airstrip
- Dust stained, hidden or missing windsocks

## Basic community airstrip inspections



### What other safety tips will keep the pilots happy?

When transferring goods from an aircraft:

- Ensure it is stationary before moving towards the plane
- Do not leave a nearby vehicle engine on
- Beware of vehicle contact with aircraft wings



### What basic inspections can make community airstrips safer?

The points below identify some aspects that are particularly relevant to community airstrip inspections. It is important to check the sky for aircrafts before inspecting.

#### Runway

This is the central strip that the aircraft uses to land or take off from. It should be free of debris, rocks, holes, ruts, vegetation, termite mounds, water or other obstructions that can be hit by the aircraft wheels or picked up by the propeller. Traveling up the runway at 80 kph in your vehicle will indicate its smoothness while a heavy vehicle on a wet runway, traveling at 15 kph will indicate if it is too wet for operations.

**NOTE:** Wheel-ruts should not exceed 25 mm in depth.

#### Runway strip

The runway strip is the cleared area at the sides and end of the runway. These act as a buffer zone to protect an aircraft should it leave the runway. This should also be clear of rocks, vegetation and other obstructions. Additionally, the border of the runway should be marked with cone markers.

#### Obstacle limitation surfaces (transitional/take off and landing surfaces)

These are the "flyover" areas outside the runway strip. The surfaces should be free of trees, power lines or other obstacles that are tall enough to conflict with aircraft during a pilot's airstrip inspection or an aborted landing. Landforms or obstacles within 3000 m can also effect wind shear on an aircraft.

#### Fences

All fences and gates around the airstrip should be secured to keep cars, people and animals away from the runway.

#### Markers

White cone markers set at 90 m intervals should give a clearly visible outline of the runway to the pilot. Markers are constructed of plastic or fibreglass materials that will shatter or shift if hit by an aircraft wheel. In addition to these markers, the exterior of the "runway strip" can be marked using solid half-drums, tyres or gable markers painted white.



Windsocks are an important indicator for the pilot.

#### Windsock

The windsock is made from canvas and shaped like an ice cream cone with a hole in each end. This is fitted to a swivel at the top of a pole. The sock is an important indicator of wind speed, strength and direction for pilots. Winds of more than 2 knots will partially lift the windsock and point it away from the wind direction. This allows pilots to view the wind direction and estimate the force of the wind. The windsock should swing freely on its mast, be free of staining or tears and located at the centre of a marked 15 m circle with a darkened base.

#### Signal area

The signal area is a 9 m circle marked by 6 cone markers. It should be located on the side closest to the runway in the windsock area. The signal area should be free of vegetation with a darkened based. The signal area is used areas to display signals to a flying pilot (e.g. a large white cross in the circle will instruct the pilot that the runway is closed, unserviceable or unsafe for landing).

### What can I do if I find a problem?

#### Minor faults

Minor faults include rock, sticks, vegetation or animals that can easily be removed from the airstrip immediately.

#### Major faults

Major Faults are not as easily rectified and could be extremely hazardous to aircraft and passengers.

These would include airstrip flooding or a rough runway surface. In these cases, it is important to place a large white cross in the signal area, indicating that it is unsafe to land on the runway.

The Reporting Officer should be aware of regular operators (Royal Flying Doctor Service, mail service, etc) that use the airstrip. This means that they can be informed of airstrip closure. The Reporting

Officer is also required to notify Civil Aviation Safety Authority of changes to an airstrip serviceability. CASA are responsible for broadcasting closure or changes to airstrips to pilots.

### For further information

On remote airstrips, go to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's website at [www.casa.gov.au](http://www.casa.gov.au) or the Royal Flying Doctor Service [www.flyingdoctor.net](http://www.flyingdoctor.net) which shows the Royal Flying Doctor Service landing area requirements.

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