



Cancelled landings at Nanaimo Airport due to inclement weather will be reduced with the advent of a new instrument landing system.

Latest technology helps out during foul weather

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The number of cancelled landings at the Nanaimo Airport will be drastically reduced once its new instrument landing system is turned on in December.

Every year a number of landings have to be aborted due to fog and inclement weather. Airport officials believe the \$16.4-million upgrades to the runway, taxiway, high-intensity lighting and ILS should reduce the number of aborted landings by 60% to 70%.

The runway will be extended 480 metres and a new 720-metre taxiway is being added, said Mike Hooper, the airport's president and CEO.

"The high-intensity lighting system will make it easier to land and take off in the fog."

The improvements also include "lead-in" lights which will extend 450 metres north of the runway that allow pilots to approach the airport at a lower altitude.

"Right now the pilot has to be able to see the runway at a distance of 650 feet (195 metres) elevation and from 2.25 miles (3.6 kilometres) away," said Hooper.

"With the instrument landing system that will change to an elevation of 338 feet (103

metres) at one (1.6 kilometres).

While much of the work has been completed except for some wiring for the new lighting system, the new landing system won't be operational until Dec. 17, said Hooper.

"Nav Canada flew it and calibrated the system last week."

The delay in using the new lighting and landing system is to allow pilots to learn about the changes.

"There is a pilot's guide that is published every two months which gives pilots the altitude and speed they can make their approach for landing at the airport and it is not published again until Dec. 17," said Hooper.

"Without alerting pilots about the changes, we can't turn on the system."

Even with the system in place and the high-intensity lighting turned on, there will still be some aborted landings due to weather.

"No airport will ever get to zero flights lost," said Jerry Pink, chairman of the Nanaimo Airport Commission. "However there will be a significant improvement of reliability at the Nanaimo Airport."

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