



'FULL CONFIDENCE' IN CAT 3 LANDING SYSTEM AFTER FOGGY FRIDAY, SAYS AIRPORT AUTHORITY

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The St. John's International Airport Authority says it has "full confidence" in its new instrument landing system, despite being bested by heavy fog on Friday.

"The situation last Friday was exceptional," said Glenn Mahon, director of operations at the airport.

"As you know, we operate in one of the most challenging weather environments in the country."

Flights arrived and departed early in the day, but thick fog moved in after 8:30 a.m. leading to a barrage of cancellations and frustrated travellers.

The number of cancelled flights raised some eyebrows, considering the expectations of a new \$37.5 million Category III Instrument Landing System (Cat 3 ILS).

In a release Monday, the airport authority said between 8:30 a.m. and 9 p.m. local time Friday, eight flights with 900 passengers operated on schedule utilizing Cat 3 ILS and low visibility technology.

The "extreme combination of fog and winds" made flight operations "challenging," especially for some of the smaller, regional airlines that are not equipped to utilize the new technology, said the news release.



On Friday, the St. John's International Airport Authority said the new landing system allows flights to land if there's 600 feet of visibility. For most of the day, visibility was half that. (Bruce Tilley/CBC)

The new system allows flights to land if there's 600 feet of visibility — but the airport authority said for most of Friday, visibility was half that.

"During that same period, two flights were diverted due to visibility being below Cat 3 limits at the time. Two other additional flights were cancelled for issues unrelated to fog or Cat 3 conditions," Mahon told the *St. John's Morning Show*.

"These aircraft were Cat 3 capable, and had these aircrafts gotten in, it would have resulted in probably close to another 800-1,000 passengers unaffected."

The airport authority said while not all planes can utilize Cat 3 ILS technology, 80 per cent of passenger traffic through YYT is handled by Air Canada and WestJet, and both have the aircraft and crew capability to use the new system.

"We have been assured by each airline that during low-visibility events, the appropriate aircraft and crews will be deployed at St. John's International Airport," said Mahon.

Mahon said he has full confidence in the new system, which was completed on budget and ahead of schedule.

"This system is going to serve us for decades to come."

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