

Foreign airlines urged to use GPS at San Francisco (Update)

July 29 2013



In this July 6, 2013 aerial file photo, the wreckage of Asiana Flight 214 lies on the ground after it crashed at the San Francisco International Airport, in San Francisco. The pilot at the controls of airliner had just 43 hours of flight time in the Boeing 777 and was landing one for the first time at San Francisco International. The Federal Aviation Administration is advising all foreign airlines to use a GPS system instead of visual approaches when landing at San Francisco International Airport in the wake of the deadly Asiana Airlines crash. Pilots on Asiana Airlines Flight 214 had been cleared to make a visual approach when the plane crash-landed on a runway at the San Francisco airport July 6. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, file)

U.S. aviation officials have advised all foreign airlines to use a GPS system instead of visual reckoning and cockpit instruments when landing at San Francisco International Airport in the wake of the deadly Asiana Airlines crash.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued the recommendation Sunday, saying in a statement that it had noticed an increase in aborted landings by some foreign carriers flying visual approaches.

Pilots on Asiana Airlines Flight 214 had been cleared to make a visual approach when the plane crash-landed July 6. Three Chinese people died, and 180 people were injured among the 307 aboard.

The plane from China and South Korea came in too low and too slow, slamming its landing gear into a seawall well before the actual runway.

Seconds before the accident, the pilots called for a go-around, meaning they wanted to abort the landing and circle for another approach. The FAA said such maneuvers are "routine, standardized procedures that can occur once a day or more at busy airports for various reasons."

Two weeks after the crash, another Asiana flight aborted its landing, San Francisco airport officials said. In addition, they said a Taiwanese EVA Air flight approached too low last week, then aborted and began another approach.

The FAA said it was investigating the EVA flight. It did not say how many other such incidents have occurred.



This July 6, 2013 aerial file photo shows a United Airlines plane sitting on the adjacent runway next to the wreckage of the Asiana Flight 214 airplane after it crashed at the San Francisco International Airport in San Francisco. The Federal Aviation Administration is advising all foreign airlines to use a GPS system instead of visual approaches when landing at San Francisco International Airport in the wake of the deadly Asiana Airlines crash. Pilots on Asiana Airlines Flight 214 had been cleared to make a visual approach when the plane crash-landed on a runway at the San Francisco airport July 6. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

Airport officials met with Asiana managers and FAA representatives after the July 19 aborted landing by the Asiana aircraft to see if any additional measures were necessary, airport spokesman Doug Yakel said.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein has met with federal and local officials about improving airport safety. Spokesman Brian Weiss said Monday that Feinstein also spoke with the South Korea ambassador. Asiana is based

in that country.

In clear weather, it's not unusual for pilots to make a visual approach, using the view through their windshield. They also can use an instrument system called a glide slope indicator, although that has been out of service in San Francisco since June 1 because of ongoing runway improvements.

The FAA said all foreign carriers should continue to use alternate instrument approaches until the glide slopes return to service in late August.

The advice came from "an abundance of caution," the FAA said in its statement. However, it's not a requirement. Foreign pilots can choose to fly visual approaches, but they typically accept air traffic control assignments.

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Citation: Foreign airlines urged to use GPS at San Francisco (Update) (2013, July 29) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-foreign-airlines-urged-gps-san.html>

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