

Feds, pilots warn of lasers pointed into cockpits

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Los Angeles Police Air Support Division helicopter pilots listen to law enforcement agents, as they announce a 60-day FBI campaign, "Don't Let a Prank Lead to Prison, Aiming a Laser at an Aircraft is a Federal Crime," to publicize the problem of pointing lasers to aircraft, during a news conference at the Los Angeles International airport Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2014. The FBI announced today that it will offer rewards up to \$10,000 for people who report others for shining laser pointers at aircraft. A handheld laser can temporarily blind pilots who sometimes need to depend on their vision for orientation. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

Airline pilots and federal officials launched a campaign Monday to warn about the dangers of people pointing lasers into cockpits. They're promising prosecution for those who are caught, and a reward for those who turn them in.

While the powerful beams of light do not harm the aircraft, they can temporarily blind pilots, some of whom had to hand over control to a co-pilot.

The number of reported incidents nationwide increased from about 2,800 in 2010 to nearly 4,000 last year, according to data collected by the Federal Aviation Administration. The FAA attributed the increase to more reporting by pilots as well as the availability of stronger lasers that can reach higher altitudes.

Portland, Ore., had the most reported instances, with 139. The rest of the top 10: Houston; Phoenix; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Los Angeles; Las Vegas; Chicago; New York; Honolulu; and Miami.

No laser incident has resulted in a crash, but officials emphasized Monday that the threat is real. The FBI plans to offer a \$10,000 reward for information that leads to a conviction.

"We applaud the FBI for recognizing how serious this situation is," said Capt. Sean Cassidy, first [vice president](#) of the Airline Pilots Association.

The FAA said that over the past two years, it has investigated 152 laser incidents, resulting in 96 "enforcement actions."

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