

UN agency urges airports to prepare for climate disruptions

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Lightning flashes behind an airport control tower on July 6, 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada

The UN agency responsible for air travel standards on Tuesday urged airports to start preparing now for severe impacts on operations related to global warming.

The Montreal-based International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

warned in its 2016 [environmental report](#) of increased [cloud cover](#) at airports in the Middle East and Latin America affecting visibility, as a result of rising temperatures and humidity.

It also pointed to a need to protect coastal airstrips around the world from rising sea levels.

The report warned of increased flight turbulence caused by changes in atmospheric jet streams, more sand and dust storms clogging engines, and more occurrences of ice on wings.

"The robustness of aircraft and indeed the robustness of the entire aviation system should be monitored carefully, as the sector will have to prepare for the more extreme meteorological conditions that are expected in the future as the climate continues to change," ICAO said in the report.

"The main effects will be more evident three or four decades from now, and onwards," it said. "There is thus no reason to panic."

But, it added, a "rational response at all airports is to carry out risk assessments of existing and new infrastructure in order to think ahead, reduce risks, minimize life cycle costs, and ensure the reliability and regularity of the aviation sector."

As an example of infrastructure at risk, it noted that out of 46 [airports](#) in Norway, 20 are "quite exposed" and several have runways less than four meters (13.1 feet) above sea level.

A 2014 assessment found several of them were at risk of flooding.

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