

**FROM THE LOGBOOK: RUNWAY INCURSIONS—BEWARE OF MISTAKES, ERRORS
AND OTHER IMPRUDENT PILOT ACTIONS ON THE RUNWAY
THEY CAN BE FATAL**

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RUNWAY INCURSION: Any occurrence at an airport involving an aircraft, vehicle, person, or object on the ground that creates a collision hazard or results in loss of separation with an aircraft taking off, or intending to take off, landing, or intending to land.

I really don't think that we have ever given this malfunction the press that it deserves simply because it is so hard to imagine a well-trained pilot pulling out in front of another aircraft or taking a wrong turn on the airport, but it happens. Until it happens to you, you will probably remain in disbelief.

I decided to write this article about incursions after watching a video of the most deadly collision ever documented. Two Boeing 747s ran together on a small island runway (now known as Tenerife North Airport) on the Spanish island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands killing 583 passengers and crew members. Experience was abundant, equipment was up-to-date and working properly, human error received the full blame, and I am sure that no one on board these two aircraft would have ever thought it could happen to them.

*Variables, foibles
and other human
factors keep us from
reaching perfection.
But at least we continue
to try!*

Until we all realize that we are not bullet proof and that anything can happen to anyone at anytime, we are a big part of the problem. Here are some thoughts to ponder before your next takeoff.

- You must know at all times where you are in relation to where you are going. Never, ever ASSUME!
- You simply must understand the communications you are hearing and follow them to the letter.
- Do your tasks in a sequence that will allow for the fewest chances to make a mistake.
- Take full advantage of the Tower and Flight Service and all they have to offer.
- Follow your checklist!
- Know the airport and where you are. Have a diagram in your hand.
- Watch for others that might not be watching for you.
- Understand the signage you are seeing and make sure you agree with it.

- A sterile cockpit allows for the most concentration.
- If you have prepared for your trip on the ground as much as you have for the one you will take in the air, you stand a better chance of being incident free.
- Read the NTSB reports on-line to see all the new ways that we have found to have an incursion. It might really surprise you at how resourceful we can be.
- Fully understand that this malady happens to every level of pilot and aircraft.

It is a sad thing to watch when a professional pilot gives a perfect read back and then does just the opposite. This happens all too often because of lack of attention or preoccupation. We sometimes get the feeling that we are the only aircraft on the airport that is moving, and we forget to focus on what we are doing, where we are, and everything that is going on that can get us into trouble. Concentration is the key to survival.

I just attended a safety meeting at our home airport, Nashville International (BNA), with the FAA Runway Safety Action Team out of Atlanta. They visit several airports nationwide and inspect the procedures used to stay safe and in compliance with the set rules and regulations. They found that 12 incursions had taken place here during 2009. With 283,067 operations, that gives BNA an incursion rate of 1.1% per 100,000 operations. It turns out that four of these errors were pilots who taxied up to the runway and took off without a clearance. This same mistake has taken place over 100 times nationwide in 2009. They have a name for this and it is called "Expectation Bias" or "Mindset." It is when you are expecting to hear a certain thing on the radio and no matter what is said, you hear what you wanted to hear. I think it is just a new way to say "Pilot Error."

Nationally in 2009 we had a total of 951 incursions. Broken down by category there were 599 Pilot Deviations, 199 Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations, and 153 Operational Error Deviations.

I suppose that as long as we have humans operating on an airport and flying aircraft, we can expect some mistakes. We spend a lot of time learning the correct ways to do things and then spend even more time learning to do them safely, but if you understand variables, foibles, and human factors, you will understand why we will probably never reach perfection. But at least we continue to try!

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FAA NATIONAL FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR of the YEAR

FAA REGIONAL SAFETY COUNSELOR of the YEAR

~~~ ACCIDENTS ARE CAUSED AND THEREFORE PREVENTABLE ~~~