



Airport Curfew Manual

What is an airport curfew and why does it exist?

The purpose of airport curfews is to minimise noise exposure to local residents from aircraft operations during night-time hours. The Department is responsible for administering curfew legislation at Sydney, Adelaide, Gold Coast and Essendon Fields Airports.

Curfews restrict aircraft operations between 11.00pm and 6.00am. The restrictions may limit the type of operations and/or the aircraft type that can take off and land. In some cases, a curfew can also restrict the runways that can be used.

In '**exceptional circumstances**', aircraft operators can apply for approval to take off or land during curfew hours through a curfew dispensation. All requests for a curfew dispensation should be made through the Duty Officer, Aviation and Airports, telephone **+61 2 6274 6998** (24 hours) or by email to: chapter2@infrastructure.gov.au

Overarching principles for curfew dispensations

- Operators must try to avoid the need for a curfew dispensation by making all reasonable efforts within their control; and
- Generally, dispensations will not be granted after 11.45pm and before 6.00am local time.

What are considered 'exceptional circumstances' for granting curfew dispensations?

Each of the curfew airports have guidelines which define 'exceptional circumstances' when a dispensation may be granted. Primary and secondary criteria for assessing a curfew dispensation request are detailed below.

Primary Criteria

Three primary criteria must be met at all curfew airports (except Essendon Fields Airport) prior to granting a dispensation:

- Immediate in origin (e.g. they occurred in the preparations for a take off from Sydney or during the take off from another airport arriving into Sydney)
- Of such character that they could not be reasonably foreseen (e.g. baggage offload; unforeseen mechanical failure; re-screening for security reasons)
- Not reasonably able to be met by alternative arrangements.

1. Immediate in origin

The circumstances under consideration for a dispensation should be applicable to the leg (or scheduled flight) into or out of the airport subject to curfew. This can include incidents discovered during boarding or in pre-flight checks. Note: at **Adelaide Airport only**, applications can include delays experienced in the previous sector.

2. Of such character that they could not reasonably have been foreseen

These circumstances could include: mechanical failure; fail-to-board passengers requiring baggage off load; security events such as a bomb threat or security re-screening; and extremely severe weather events that are not forecast (weather is explored further below).

3. Not reasonably able to be met by alternative arrangements

Alternative arrangements could include: diversion of a flight to an alternate airport; passengers being placed on alternative flights; use of alternative aircraft, carriers or options for transport (e.g. bus or train between Brisbane and Gold Coast); and flight cancellation if feasible. High passenger loadings mean there may be more limited options in terms of alternate arrangements.

Secondary criteria

Once the three primary criteria are satisfied, secondary criteria detailed below can be taken into consideration:

1. Requested time for curfew dispensation

A movement at 11.15pm is generally more acceptable than a movement at 11.45pm. Dispensations past 11.45pm are unlikely to be granted and such requests should be avoided if at all possible.

2. Aircraft arrival route

At both Sydney and Adelaide Airports, an over water approach will keep noise away from noise sensitive areas to the greatest extent possible. For Sydney Airport, landing and take off on the main runway (Runway 34L for landing and take off on Runway 16R) over Botany Bay is preferred. For Adelaide Airport landing on Runway 05 and take off on Runway 23 over the Gulf St Vincent is required unless weather conditions mean this is not possible for safety reasons.

3. Weather

In most cases, weather is known well in advance of the curfew and can be foreseen and mitigated against. However, the timing and severity of adverse weather conditions could form part of the deliberations of the 'exceptional circumstances'. For example, clearing of a tarmac at 6.00pm due to unpredicted lightning strikes causing associated delays and traffic congestion would not be considered an 'exceptional circumstance', whereas the same situation commencing at 10.00pm local time may be considered an 'exceptional circumstance' as there is little time to make reasonable alternative arrangements.

4. Accommodation

Lack of accommodation is not a factor in the primary criteria of 'not reasonably able to be met by alternative arrangements'. However, it is a factor associated with assessing the likely severity of hardship to passengers arising from difficulties in being able to accommodate passengers overnight. For example, a flight with a significant number of unaccompanied minors, wheelchair passengers or passengers with medical conditions may be more challenging for the airline to find suitable accommodation for, as well as meeting their other needs. Large public events in the nearby city may also make it harder to find passenger accommodation.

In making their assessment as to whether lack of suitable accommodation will be used to support a request for a curfew dispensation, airlines are expected to assess the number of passengers who live locally so as to more accurately determine accommodation needs.

Circumstances not considered exceptional

The following situations are generally not considered exceptional:

- Delays caused by adverse weather conditions which were known to the operator well in advance of an aircraft taking off or landing, allowing alternate arrangements to be made
- Disruptions to an airline's network or schedules due to mechanical problems (as distinct from immediate or unforeseen problems arising with the particular aircraft scheduled)
- Airline management considerations (such as a need to reposition aircraft or crew)
- Industrial action by airlines staff
- Circumstances of any kind where there has been sufficient time for alternate arrangements to be put in place or where a normal degree of operational flexibility should have sufficed to address the problem.

Permitted Operations

As a general rule, most commercial aircraft carrying passengers or large freight aircraft are prohibited from operating during the curfew. The main exceptions to this rule are:

- Pre-approved 'shoulder movements' by international flights which occur between 5.00am-6.00am local time at Sydney and Adelaide
- A limited number of pre-approved low-noise freighter aircraft that operate under quota arrangements
- Propeller aircraft under 34,000kg that meet international noise certification standards
- Emergency aircraft (e.g. police, air-ambulance, Royal Flying Doctor Service, aircraft conducting search and rescue operations)
- Any aircraft declaring an emergency
- Specified low-noise corporate jet aircraft that meet international noise certification standards.

These movements do not require dispensations.

Pre-curfew Taxi Clearance

An aircraft may take off during a curfew period if the pilot has requested and **received** taxi clearance from Air Traffic Control for the take off before 11.00pm local time. Note that push-back clearance is not taxi clearance. If the aircraft has not been granted taxi clearance prior to 11.00pm, a curfew dispensation must be requested.

Airport Specific Conditions

Sydney Airport

Runways to be used during the Curfew

Aircraft operating during the curfew at Sydney Airport must use runway 16R for departures and runway 34L for arrivals.

In addition, between 10.45pm and 11.00pm, take offs are restricted to Runway 16R (departure over Botany Bay). This applies from Monday to Friday. On Saturday and Sunday take offs are restricted to Runway 16R between 10.00pm and 11.00pm. Airlines are best advised in a situation where a north take off would be required to seek pre-curfew taxi clearance and take off over Botany Bay.

Use of Reverse Thrust during Curfew Periods at Sydney Airport

If the pilot of an aircraft lands using reverse thrust greater than idle reverse thrust during the curfew period, the operator must, within seven days of the incident, lodge a return with Airservices Australia or via the Department's website providing details of the event. It is deemed an offence if the return is not lodged within seven days after the landing. Airservices Australia monitors possible reverse-thrust usage during curfew hours.

Missed Approaches during the Curfew Period at Sydney Airport

If the pilot of an aircraft landing during the curfew period makes a missed approach, the operator must, within seven days of the attempted landing, lodge a missed approach return to Airservices Australia or via the Department's website providing relevant details of the event. It is deemed an offence if the return is not lodged within seven days after the attempted landing. Airservices Australia reports to the Department regarding missed approaches during the curfew period.

Emergency landings (resuming flights during curfew)

Aircraft which make an emergency landing during the curfew at Sydney Airport are **not permitted** to resume the flight during the curfew period.

Sydney Curfew Shoulder Movements

Sydney Airport allows for approved international shoulder movements during curfew. Airlines apply for international shoulder movements on an annual basis. The Sydney regulations allow for 24 weekly, but no more than five per day, arrivals of international passenger services between 5.00am and 6.00am at approved times of the year and days of the week.

These movements are approved during the northern hemisphere summer scheduling period between late March and late October. At present, these shoulder movements are allocated to Qantas (10), British Airways (7) and Singapore Airlines (7).

Air Traffic Control monitors these movements closely. The Department also monitors these allocations.

Adelaide Airport

Previous sector

At Adelaide Airport only, applications for a curfew dispensation can include consideration of delays experienced in the previous sector.

Emergency landings (resuming flights during curfew)

Aircraft which make an emergency landing during the curfew at Adelaide Airport are permitted to resume the flight during the curfew period.

Diversions

In the event that Adelaide Airport is required as an alternate landing airport (i.e. aircraft diverted to Adelaide due to fog at Perth, as distinct from an emergency) international scheduled services are permitted to resume operations. Domestic scheduled services that are diverted to Adelaide are **not permitted** to resume the flight during the curfew.

Runways to be used during the Curfew

Landings on Runway 05 and departures from Runway 23 are designed to minimise aircraft noise impacts on residential areas of Adelaide by directing traffic over Gulf St Vincent.

The use of Runway 23 for landings should be considered only when Runway 05 is declared by Air Traffic Control to be not operationally acceptable for landings. The use of Runway 05 for take offs should be considered only when Runway 23 is declared by Air Traffic Control to be not operationally acceptable for departures.

Reverse thrust should only be used at idle levels, where safety permits, during the curfew. Full length runway departures are required wherever operationally acceptable.

Quota Movements

International airlines using curfew shoulder quota movements, which use a runway other than Runway 05, must lodge a report stating why an alternative runway was used, within seven days of the landing.

Low noise heavy freight aircraft operating during the curfew on a quota arrangement, which use a runway other than Runway 05, must lodge a report stating why an alternative runway was used, within seven days of the landing.

Gold Coast Airport

Quota Movements

Gold Coast Airport provides for an annual quota of 24 passenger jet movements during curfew hours to cater for peak demand periods such as school holidays, Easter and Christmas periods and special events.

These quota flights are permitted for the following movements:

- (a) when the legal time in Queensland is the same as the legal time in New South Wales, to enable a domestic passenger jet aircraft to land at, or take off from, Gold Coast Airport between 11:00pm and 11:45pm
- (b) when daylight saving time is in force in New South Wales, to enable a domestic passenger jet aircraft to land at Gold Coast Airport between 11:00pm and 11:30pm.

If an airline uses a curfew quota, they are required to advise the Department within seven days, including advice about the reason the quota was used.

Emergency landings (resuming flights during curfew)

Aircraft which make an emergency landing during the curfew at Gold Coast Airport **are permitted** to resume the flight during the curfew period.

Diversions

In the event that Gold Coast Airport is required as an alternate landing airport (i.e. aircraft diverted to Gold Coast due to fog at Brisbane, as distinct from an emergency) **international** scheduled services are **permitted** to resume operations.

Domestic scheduled services that are diverted to Gold Coast are **not permitted** to resume the flight during the curfew.

Preferred Runways

The preferred runway for landings is Runway, 14 and Runway 32 is preferred for take offs.

Pre-Curfew Taxi

At certain times the Air Traffic Control Tower at Gold Coast airport is not manned, and Air Traffic Control services are provided remotely from Brisbane. At such times, an aircraft that has begun to taxi before 11.00pm will be considered to have pre-curfew taxi clearance and be able to take off after 11.00pm without requiring a curfew dispensation.

Proximity to Brisbane

For an airport like Gold Coast, located a short distance from Brisbane Airport which is not subject to a curfew, the option of diverting aircraft to or from Brisbane Airport should be given all possible consideration before opting to request a curfew dispensation.