EUROPEAN ORGANISATION
FOR THE SAFETY OF AIR NAVIGATION

SNOWTAM Harmonisation Guidelines

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Abstract
The objective of the SNOWTAM harmonisation guidelines is to assist originators and NOTAM offices in adhering to the ICAO SNOWTAM syntax.

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The following table identifies all management authorities who have successively approved the present issue of this document.

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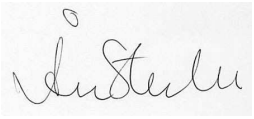
Author	 Åsa Standar EUROCONTROL	14 November 2013
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EDITION NUMBER	EDITION DATE	REASON FOR CHANGE	PAGES AFFECTED
1.0	2010-09-01	Guidelines agreed by AI Operations Sub-group members	All
1.1	2010-09-24	Editorial changes and insertion of new subject	Pg 9 and 11
1.2	2013-05-22	Update in accordance with ICAO Annex 15 Amdt 37	All
1.3	2013-10-25	Update after review by AI Operations Sub-group members	All
2.0	2013-11-14	Released issue approved by AIM/SWIM Team members	All

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INTRODUCTION

The SNOWTAM is a special series NOTAM notifying the presence or removal of hazardous conditions due to snow, ice, slush or standing water associated with snow, slush and ice on the movement area, by means of a specific format.

When information concerning snow, slush, ice and standing water is reported by means of a SNOWTAM, the message shall contain the information in the order of the SNOWTAM Format as provided in ICAO Annex 15.

The need for SNOWTAM encoding guidelines was identified by EUROCONTROL during the execution of the Digital SNOWTAM Trial held during the period of December 2009 to May 2010.

The automatic analysis of the incoming SNOWTAM messages showed that many originators and NOTAM offices have difficulties in adhering to the ICAO SNOWTAM syntax, especially for States that only occasionally issue such messages.

In order to support the States improve their SNOWTAM encoding, EUROCONTROL has with the support of the AI Operations Subgroup members and approval by the AIM/SWIM Team developed a set of SNOWTAM harmonisation guidelines.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to NOTAM operators and airport managers in correctly filling the various fields of the SNOWTAM message. The document includes examples of correct SNOWTAM format in grey shading. Also, to enable users to avoid syntactical errors, instructions are included in *italic text* which includes some *´not to do´* examples.

The guidelines do not contradict at any point the ICAO SARPS contained in Annex 15. Instead, these guidelines repeat and expand the ICAO SARPS with examples and suggestions based on real world "contamination" situations.

The updated version of the guidelines reflects the changes to the SNOWTAM format as provided by Amendment 37 to ICAO Annex 15 (applicable 14 November 2013), including the introduction of repeated item B when reporting on more than one runway and the change in reporting format in item H (estimated surface friction).

The document deals only with the syntactical correctness of the SNOWTAM messages. It does not provide operational guidelines, such as those provided by ICAO Annex 15, Appendix 2 or by other ICAO or Regional documents and circulars.

CHAPTER 1 – General SNOWTAM encoding guidelines

1.1 Minimal SNOWTAM information

Any SNOWTAM message is expected to contain some minimal information in order to be operationally useful. There are two aspects on this:

- technically expected is the airport identifier, the date and time(s) when the observation of the runway(s) was performed, the runway identifier(s). Without these items, the SNOWTAM message is unusable as it would be unknown to which surface and for which time of validity it was issued;
- operationally expected is information about the contaminant and, if contamination exists, the estimated surface friction. However, it shall be kept in mind that there may be exceptional circumstances (technical or legal reasons) where the SNOWTAM originator is unable to provide an estimation of the surface friction. Item H might in such cases be missing.

1.2 English text

SNOWTAM intended for international distribution shall include English text for those parts expressed in plain language.

1.3 No empty fields

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 1.b)	"Items together with their indicator must be dropped completely, where no information is to be included"

It is incorrect to send SNOWTAM messages with the item indicator followed by an empty field when there is no information to report for that field. This can trigger parsing problems for the recipient system that try to automatically decode the information, because an empty field needs to be treated as an "exception".

- *This SNOWTAM message is structured incorrectly:*

A)EADD
B)12220945
C)02
D)
E)
F)1/1/1
G)XX/XX/XX
H)5/5/5
J)
K)
L)
M)
N)6
P)
R)6
S)
T)

1.4 Repeat fields B to P for each runway

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 1.a)	"When reporting on more than one runway, repeat items B to P inclusive"

Example: There should be a true repetition of these fields, as in the example below.

A) EADD

B) 12220945 C) 08L F) 5/5/5 G) 2/2/2 H) 2/1/1 N) 5 B) 12221020 C) 08R F) 1/1/1 G) XX/XX/XX H) 5/5/5 N) 5

S) 12221145

T) RWY 08L CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT.
RWY 08R CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT - WET DUE TO CHEMICAL SPRAYING. ALL TWY AND APRONS CONTAMINATED AT 100 PERCENT.

- *Do not use column alignment when repeating the B...P sequence of fields. This could cause major parsing problems for the recipient.*
- *This SNOWTAM message is structured incorrectly:*

A)EADD
B)12220945 B)12221020
C)08L C)08R
F)5/5/5 F)1/1/1
G)2/2/3 G)XX/XX/XX

H)2/1/1 H)5/5/5
N)5 N)5
S)12221145
T)RWY 08L CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT.
RWY 08R CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT - WET DUE TO CHEMICAL SPRAYING.
ALL TWY AND APRONS CONTAMINATED AT 100 PERCENT.

1.5 Several fields on a single line and line feed

Several fields can be grouped on a single line. ICAO Annex 15 indicates appropriate line feeds in the SNOWTAM format to improve readability of the message. Include a line feed after the SNOWTAM serial number, after Item A, after the last item referring to the runway (e.g. Item P and after Item S.

Example:

A) EADD
B) 12220945 C) 08L F) 5/5/5 G) 2/2/3 H) 2/1/1 N) 5 P) YES30
B) 12221020 C) 08R F) 1/1/1 G) XX/XX/XX H) 5/5/5 N) 5 P) YES30
R) NO S) 12221145

T) RWY 08L CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT. RWY 08R CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT - WET DUE TO CHEMICAL SPRAYING. ALL TWY CONTAMINATED AT 100 PERCENT.

1.6 Runway closed

Although information concerning a closure of a runway in accordance with ICAO Annex 15 shall be published as a NOTAM, some States have the need to provide this information also in the SNOWTAM message when the closure is related to contamination on the runway. The current ICAO instructions for completion of the SNOWTAM format do not specify how to communicate that a runway is closed due to snow/ice/water/... contamination.

Recognizing that the ICAO SNOWTAM format instructions for Items A to S does not allow “runway closed” reporting, the recommended place for runway closed due to contamination in the SNOWTAM is in item T, described in plain language.

Example: The format of the SNOWTAM should be followed with the appropriate fields filled in. In this example, at completion of the observation both RWY 09 and 27 are closed, stated in Item T.

A) EAVV
B) 12180715
C) 09
F) 4/4/4

G) 50/50/50
H) 1/1/1
T) RWY 09/27 CLOSED

1.7 SNOWTAM numbering

As for NOTAM in general, it is recommended also for SNOWTAM to adopt a numbering sequence starting at the beginning of the year. However, some States have adopted their yearly numbering sequence starting at the beginning of the winter season, based on local conditions.

The serial number is indicated both in the abbreviated heading and also as the first text line in the SNOWTAM format.

In the first text line, the text “SNOWTAM“ and the serial number is separated by a space.

Example:

SNOWTAM 0145

1.8 SNOWTAM validity

The maximum validity of a SNOWTAM is 24 hours, with reference to the date/time of observation, visible in item B for the user. When there is a repeated B-field, the 24 hour validity reference for the message is the latest completed date/time of measurement.

1.9 Change in conditions - issue a new SNOWTAM

A new SNOWTAM shall be issued when there is a change in conditions, which are significant for operations. ICAO Annex 15 is listing the changes relating to runway conditions that are considered significant.
The ICAO instructions do not state that a new SNOWTAM shall be issued only when changes in values are causing worse conditions. It is also important to issue a new SNOWTAM when changes in runway conditions are improved, and not to leave a SNOWTAM valid with information that may restrict usage of the airport.

1.10 Use of “COR” in the Abbreviated heading

In case there is a need to correct an error in an issued SNOWTAM, the ICAO SNOWTAM format allows sending a corrected version of the message instead of issuing a new message with a new number. The corrected message shall be sent with the same serial number as the incorrect SNOWTAM and with the letters "**COR**" inserted in the Optional Group in the Abbreviated heading. .

CHAPTER 2 – SNOWTAM fields

2.1 Item A) - aerodrome location indicator

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 2)	"Aerodrome location indicator (four-letter location indicator)."

2.2 Item B) - observation date & time

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 3)	"Eight-figure date/time group - giving time of completion of measurement as month, day, hour and minute in UTC."

Example: The date/time group in item B) shows that the latest measurement for that runway was completed at 0945 UTC, on the 22nd of December

B) 12220945

2.3 Item C) - runway designator

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 4)	"Lower runway designator number."

Example: Only one runway designator shall be inserted in the format, and always the lowest number. The lower runway designator is indicated even if the runway conditions are established from the designator with the higher number and/or RWY in-use is normally the runway with the higher number.

C) 01L

Example: If more than one runway is reported, the sequence of the runways in item C) should be from the lower to the higher

A) EABB
B) 11070620 C) 02 D)…P)
B) 11070600 C) 09 D)…P)
B) 11070700 C) 12 D)…P)
R) NO S) 11070920

T) DEICING

- *Do not insert both runway indicators (C)10/28)*
- *Do not insert the higher designator, nor repeat for each third (C)28L/28L/28L)*
- *Do not leave out the information of the runway designator(s) concerned.*

2.4 Item D) - cleared runway length

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 5)	"Cleared runway length in metres if less than published length (see item T on reporting on part of runway not cleared)."

Example: Insert the number of metres that are cleared, reporting the reduced cleared length of the runway. Information on the part of the runway that is **not** cleared, including *which* part, is done in Item T).

D) 2000

- *Do not insert free text about the status of the cleared runway in Item D (such as D) FULL or D) ALL RUNWAY). If the whole runway is cleared, Item D shall be left out completely.*
- *Do not insert the published runway length. If the whole runway length is cleared, item D) shall be left out completely*.

2.5 Item E) - cleared runway width

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 6)	"Cleared runway width in metres, if less than published width; if offset left or right of centre line, add (without space) “L” or “R”, as viewed from the threshold having the lower runway designation number".

Example: Insert the number of metres that is cleared, indicating a reduced cleared width of the runway.

E) 20

Example: The example below shows that the runway is cleared 20 metres of the total width. It is the right side of the centerline that is cleared, as viewed from the threshold with the lower designation number. The letter “R” follows the numbers (in metres) without a blank, similar to the format of runway designators.

E) 20R

- *Only the value of cleared width shall be inserted in Item E), not the published runway width. Leave the unit (metre) out (and not like this E) 10M).*

2.6 Item F) - deposits over total runway length

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 7)	"Deposit over total runway length as explained in SNOWTAM Format (*Observed on each third of the runway, starting from threshold having the lower runway designation number)*. Suitable combinations of the numbers may be used to indicate varying conditions over runway segments. If more than one deposit is present on the same portion of the runway, they should be reported in sequence from the top (closest to the sky) to the bottom (closest to the runway). Drifts, depths of deposit appreciably greater than the average values or other significant characteristics of the deposits may be reported under item T, in plain language". The values for each third of the runway shall be separated by an oblique stroke (/), without space between the deposit values and the oblique stroke. Example: 47/47/47."

Example: The example below shows that WET SNOW (5) is contaminating the first third of the runway, seen from the threshold with the lower designation number. The second and third parts have SLUSH (6). The values are also valid for the runway with the higher designation number, where the first and second thirds deposit is SLUSH (6) and the third part is WET SNOW (5).

F) 5/6/6

Example: When reporting of more than one deposit-type for each third, the first number in sequence shall be the upper deposit type. In the example in Item F), the first and third parts have deposit ICE (7) closest to runway and COMPACTED OR ROLLED SNOW (8) on top.

F) 87/7/87

- *The values in Item F) shall be separated by an oblique stroke (/) and not by space or a hyphen (F) 4 4 4 or F) 4-4-4)*
- *The values for all three thirds shall be inserted in Item F, even if the values are the same for each third.*

  This is a creative way of informing that all three thirds of the runway is clear and dry, but not correct syntax (F) N/I/L). NIL should be inserted three times.

2.7 Item G) - mean depth deposit for each third of total runway length

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 8)	"Mean depth in millimetres deposit for each third of total length, or 'XX' if not measurable or operationally not significant; the assessment to be made to an accuracy of 20 mm for dry snow, 10 mm for wet snow and 3 mm for slush". The values for each third of the runway shall be separated by an oblique stroke (/), without space between the values and the oblique stroke. For example: 20/20/20."

Example: The example below shows that the depth of the deposit is 20 mm for each third of the runway.

G) 20/20/20

Example: The example below shows that the depth of the deposit is not measurable or operationally not significant.

G) XX/XX/XX

- *Even if the value for the deposit depth is the same for all three runway parts, the value shall be repeated for each runway third (and not G) 20)*
- *The value NIL shall not be used (G) NIL/NIL/NIL).*

2.8 Item H) – estimated surface friction on each third of the runway

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 9)	"Estimated surface friction on each third of the runway (single digit) in the order from the threshold having the lower runway designation number. Friction measurement devices can be used as part of the overall runway surface assessment. Some States may have developed procedures for runway surface assessment which may include the use of information obtained from friction measuring devices and the reporting of quantitative values. In such cases, these procedures should be published in the AIP and the reporting made in Item T) of the SNOWTAM format The values for each third of the runway are separated by an oblique stroke (/), without space between the values and the oblique stroke. For example: 5/5/5."

Example: This example shows the estimated surface friction for each third of the runway, indicating that the friction is GOOD for the first third and MEDIUM to GOOD for the second and third parts. The values are separated with an oblique stroke (/).

H) 5/4/4

- *The estimated surface friction value shall not be expressed in wording (H) GOOD/GOOD/GOOD) but only as the equivalent single digit (in this case it should be 5/5/5).*
- *Even if the value for the estimated surface friction is the same for all three runway parts, the value shall be repeated for each runway third (and not only H) 5).*
- *The values for the three third shall not be separated by a space (H) 3 3 3). The correct way is H) 3/3/3, separated by an oblique stroke (/).*

2.9 Item J) - critical snow banks

ICAO SARPS Instruction

Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 10)	"If critical snow banks are present, insert height in centimetres and distance from the edge of runway in metres (separated by an oblique stroke), followed (without space) by left (“L”) or right (“R”) side or both sides (“LR”), as viewed from the threshold having the lower runway designation number."

The identification and reporting of critical snow banks lies within the responsibility of the aerodrome authority. Note that States in their seasonal snow plans may publish additional descriptions.

Example: The example below shows that there are snow banks 60 cm high adjacent to the runway, at a distance of 15 metres from the edge. The snow banks are situated on the left hand side of the runway, as viewed from the threshold with the lower designated number. Note that there is no blank (space) between the last value and the LR indicator.

J) 60/15L

Example:

If the snow banks are just next to the runway (closer than 1 metre), insert the value "0" to comply the normal syntax of this field. Do not leave the value empty.

J) 60/0L

- *Do not include a decimal in the value for the distance from the edge is included (J) 30/23,5LR). Decimals are not allowed, so round-down to the nearest whole number. A round-down is proposed, not a round-up, because such snow banks are normally situated outside the usable runway. The round-down will put the snow bank in the least favorable position.*

2.10 Item K) - runway lights

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 11)	"If runway lights are obscured, insert YES (without space) followed by “L”, “R” or both “LR”, as viewed from the threshold having the lower runway designation number."

Example: The “YES” in the example below indicates that the runway lights are obscured. It is the lights on the right side of the runway that are affected, as viewed from the threshold with the lower designation number.

K) YESR

If the runway lights are not obscured, do not indicate this (like K) NO). Instead drop Item K completely.

- *In this example, the order of the letters is wrong (K) YES RL). They should be reversed, starting with L (left) and there should not be a space (blank) between “YES” and “RL”.*

2.11 Item L) - further clearance

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 12)	"When further clearance will be undertaken, enter length (m) and width (m) of runway or “TOTAL” if runway will be cleared to full dimensions."

Example: The first example shows that further clearance will be made of the TOTAL length and width of the runway. The second example shows that further clearance will be made on 2500 metres of length, and 45 metres of width. The anticipated time of when the clearance is completed is found in Item M).

L) TOTAL

L) 2500/45

- *If there is no planned further clearance, do not indicated this (such as L) NO). Instead drop Item L) completely.*
- *The values for further cleared runway length and width shall not be separated with space (such as L) 2000 45), but with an oblique stroke (/).*

2.12 Item M - further clearance expected to be completed ... (UTC)

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 13	"Enter the anticipated time of completion in UTC."

Example: Item M relates to Item L, and indicates the time when the further clearance of the runway (length and width) is expected to be completed, expressed as hhmm in UTC.

M) 1300

- *If Item L is not reported, Item M shall not be reported either.*

2.13 Item N) - taxiway

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 14	"The code (and combination of codes) for Item F may be used to describe taxiway conditions; enter “NO” if no taxiways serving the associated runway are available."

There is a wide variety in how Item N is filled in by different States. ICAO only instructs the contaminant to be provided or the word "NO" if no taxiways are available serving that runway.

Example: Basic example of item N, just the contaminant for the taxiways.

N) 5

Example: If all taxiways are unusable, use the word NO in item N = no taxiways serving the associated runway are available.

N) NO

Many States inform not only of the deposit of the taxiways, but also on estimated surface friction. For a larger airport with a number of taxiways serving the runway, the report can be rather detailed. The examples below provide suggestions for harmonizing the syntax used in Item N. In particular, these formats are understood by the Digital SNOWTAM Application.

Example: This example is valid when the information is applicable for all taxiways serving the runway. It has the syntax: *deposit-type number (as in Item F)/estimated surface friction value*. The taxiway designator does not need to be included.

N) 2/POOR (Meaning that taxiway(s) are wet/surface friction is poor)

Example: These examples are valid when information is available for individual taxiways serving the runway. The syntax is: *TWY designator/deposit-type number/estimated surface friction value*. Separate information-groupings with comma.

N) A1/2/POOR, B1/4/GOOD, C1/2/GOOD

N) A1/2, A2/5/POOR)

Example: This compressed syntax can be used if there are groups of taxiways with the same values of contamination and surface friction. Separate the taxiways with space.

N) A1 B2 C/2/POOR

N) A1 B2 C/2/GOOD

Taxiways closed: As for closed runways, the recommended place for informing about closed taxiways in the SNOWTAM due to contamination is in Item T, described in plain language.

2.14 Item P) - taxiway snow banks

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 15)	"If snow banks are higher than 60 cm, enter “YES” followed by the lateral distance parting the snow banks (the distance between) in metres."

Example: The example below shows that there are snow banks on the taxiway(s) higher than 60 cm (YES). The number indicates the distance between the snow banks in metres.

P) YES30

This item refers to the taxiway that serves the runway in Item C. The current syntax does not distinguish which taxiway that contains the snow banks, in case there is more than one taxiway serving the runway. This is an area of improvement.

2.15 Item R) - apron

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 16)	"The code (or combinations of codes) for Item F may be used to describe apron conditions; enter “NO” if the apron is unusable."

As for Item N, there is a wide variety in how Item R is filled in by different States. ICAO only instructs contaminant information to be published in Item R.

Example: Basic example of Item R, just the contaminant for the aprons.

R) 5

Example: If all aprons are unusable, insert the word “NO”.

R) NO

Many States inform not only about the deposit on the apron, but also about the estimated surface friction. For a larger airport with a significant number of aprons, the report can be rather detailed. The examples below provide suggestions for harmonizing the syntax used in Item R. In particular, these formats are understood by the Digital SNOWTAM Application.

Example: This example is applicable when the information is the same for all aprons. It has the syntax: *deposit-type number (as in Item F)/estimated surface friction value*. The apron designator does not need to be included.

R) 2/POOR *(meaning apron(s) are wet/surface friction is poor*)

Example: These examples are applicable when information is provided for individual aprons. The syntax is: *Apron designator/deposit-type number/estimated surface friction value*. Separate the information about each apron with comma.

R) B-SOUTH/2/POOR, B-NORTH/39/GOOD

R) CARGO/379, MIL/5/POOR)

Example: This compressed syntax can be used if there are groups of aprons with the same values of contamination and surface friction. Separate the apron designators with space.

R) B-SOUTH B-NORTH MIL/2/POOR

R) HANGAR CARGO B-NORTH/NIL/GOOD

Apron closed: As for closed runways and taxiways, the recommended place for informing about closed aprons in the SNOWTAM due to contamination is in Item T, described in plain language.

2.16 Item S) - next planned observation/measurement

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2, item 17)	"Enter the anticipated time of next observation/measurement (month/day/hour) in UTC"

Example: Next observation/measurement is anticipated on the 24th of December at 0800 UTC.

S) 12240800

- *This syntax for the time of next measurement is incorrect (S) 1300). It should be mmddhhmm, providing 8 digits. Do not forget to start with the month and then the day.*
- *Do not insert the year to the reported anticipated time for next observation/measurement (such as S) **13**12171300).*

2.17 .Item T) - plain-language remarks

ICAO SARPS	Instruction
Annex 15, Appendix 2,	"Describe in plain language any operationally significant information but always report on length of uncleared runway (Item D) and extent of runway contamination (Item F) for each third of the runway (if appropriate) in accordance

item 18) with the following scale:

“RWY CONTAMINATION 10 PERCENT” if 10 % or less of runway contaminated.

“RWY CONTAMINATION 25 PERCENT” if 11-25% of runway contaminated.

“RWY CONTAMINATION 50 PERCENT” if 26-50% of runway contaminated.

“RWY CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT” if 51-100% of runway contaminated.

Example: Example of information of uncleared runway related to information in Item D (e.g. 2000), in the same SNOWTAM.

T) THIRD PART FM THR 04 NOT CLEARED

Example: Examples of information related to Item F), for contamination on runways, taxiways and aprons.

T) RWY 01L CONTAMINATION 100 PERCENT, RWY 01R CONTAMINATION 50 PERCENT, TWY CONTAMINATION 50 PERCENT, APRONS CONTAMINATION 50 PERCENT

T) RWY CONTAMINATION 100/50/100 PERCENT

Example: Information on clearing status can be inserted.

T) DEICING USED ON RWY 01L

Example: Example of information of closed runways, taxiways or aprons due to contamination.

T) RWY 01R, TWY A1, B2 AND APRON CARGO CLOSED