

Case Study Comment 2

by Captain Ed Pooley

Plenty of holes in those defensive slices of cheese – and all nicely lined up with only providence to save the day.

Not necessarily in any significant order, we have:

- Management who have no idea how to engender a safety culture in the airport workforce.
- An LRST which has representation which appears to be without sufficient delegated authority to be able to engage in effectively prioritising issues in a climate of 'scarce resources'.
- An LRST which on the face of it - for example driver training for a new airside layout - seems to accept that there is only one fixed price solution to the training need. Flexible thinking is a necessary part of risk management given that the 'gold-plated' solution may not be achievable.
- One frequency and one controller for all runway occupancy is a pretty obvious way to raise controller awareness whatever supporting aids are available - but not in use at this airport.
- New equipment needs adequate training and ATC management were foolish to accept its use without finding a way to deliver this beforehand.
- No mention of the circumstances that led to the incorrect braking action being passed - or of any visual or other evidence that weather at the aerodrome had changed in a way that might render the one given no longer valid - but something is wrong somewhere.
- A pilot in command who allowed a typical short haul day to create a situation where a cautionary alert became a distraction sufficient to fail to check in on TWR
- The landing does not appear to have been carried out in RVR conditions so the runway must have been visible before the landing occurred. But there was no mention of a visual check being made of the runway ahead clear by the pilots - or of the conspicuousness of the vehicle on the runway when viewed from short final against whatever colour the visible surface of the runway was. Was it easily seen? If so why no go around?
- And finally, we have a TWR controller who allowed themselves to be distracted from normal situational awareness when (it seems fair to assume) that they must have been expecting a call from the inbound aircraft after APP had handed off to them.

Being asked to offer just one recommendation with all the above to sort out is a bit of a challenge! And there is absolutely no single cure for the risk of collision created which was the primary concern. But the most vulnerable person in the 'error chain' is the runway controller working alone. So.....

RECOMMENDATION:

A controller should only be required to attend meetings on behalf of ATC when they have completed their controlling duties in the shift concerned. This may not eliminate the propensity to be distracted but it might well help. ↗



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He now works as an independent air safety adviser for a range of clients and is currently acting as Validation Manager for SKYbrary.