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News Release

For Immediate Release

Airport to Close Three Days in August

In mid-August, 2011, the Springfield-Branson National Airport will close for three days due to runway resurfacing. During that time the airport will be closed to all aircraft, with the exception of helicopters.

"Closing the airport is something we'd rather not do," says Gary Cyr, director of aviation. "But it's unavoidable."

The airport has two runways. Only one is being resurfaced. That runway will be closed all summer, while the other remains open so planes can land and take off. The airport will remain open until resurfacing work reaches the intersection of the two runways.

"That's the point where we have to close the airport," says Cyr. "We can't work near the intersection and allow take offs and landings. That would be an unsafe situation."

The airport will close at 11:00 am on August 12, and reopen at 11:00 am on August 15. During that 72-hour period crews will work around-the-clock to resurface the intersection area. One reason mid August was chosen for the closure is because it's the tail end of the summer travel season—a time when passenger numbers slack off.

Since most flights are booked less than 90 days before a flight, seven months will be plenty of notice for most airline customers. "But inevitably there will be a few people who have already booked a flight during the closure," says Cyr. "I urge them to call their airline and rebook."

The airport estimates that the closure will affect roughly 6,000 passengers.

This week airport officials began spreading word of the closing. The short list of those affected includes the public, airline customers, airlines, rental car companies, terminal restaurants, small plane owners, corporate pilots, and cargo airlines.

Cyr says the airport met with airline representatives on Wednesday. "We're now waiting to hear back from them on how they'll handle the situation. They could cancel the affected flights, or they might choose to fly into a nearby airport such as Joplin. Right now, we don't know what they'll do."

The airport has two runways:

- Runway 14/32. 8,000 feet long
- Runway 2/20. 7,000 feet long
The airport will resurface 5,400 feet of Runway 14/32 (diagram A). The last resurfacing of this runway was done with asphalt in 1994. This pavement is now 16 years old and has reached the end of its life cycle.

Bid amounts will determine if the resurfacing is done with asphalt or concrete (concrete is typically more expensive). The life cycle of asphalt is 12-15 years, while the life cycle of concrete is about 30 years.

The airport will open bids for the project on March 4. The bid amounts become public the day bids are opened. The Federal Aviation Administration will pay 95 percent of the cost, with the remainder paid by the airport.

The work will occur in stages. The first stage involves removing the old asphalt surface with a milling machine. It will then be replaced with new asphalt or concrete.

Work will begin in May and the runway will reopen by October 14, 2011.

While Runway 14/32 is being resurfaced, all flights will land and take off from Runway 2/20 until work reaches the intersection of the runways (the intersection is denoted with the red circle in diagram B). At that point, the airport will close for three days. It is not unusual for the airport to close a runway. It is done routinely for maintenance and construction. What is unusual is to have both runways closed at the same time. This last occurred in 1972 for similar work. However, in 1972 the airport was closed for nearly a month: September 25 to October 23.

Repaving near the intersection demands closing both runways because workers and equipment will infringe on the safety area of Runway 2/20. The safety area is 250 feet wide, on either side of the runway, and is measured from the runway centerline. (diagram C). Planes can not land if there's anything, or anyone, in the safety area. The airport looked at options that avoid closing the airport, but none existed that met federal safety guidelines.

Runway 2/20 was resurfaced with concrete in 2003. Resurfacing of that runway probably won't be needed for at least 20 years.

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