

AvTurf's First Year of Testing Complete

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Readies For Industry Acceptance

With its first year of testing complete, AvTurf® is poised for industry-wide airport acceptance as the synthetic grass surface designed to improve safety, reduce bird strikes and reduce delays associated with runway operations.

In May of this year, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported that it found AvTurf® acceptable to install in the runway safety areas per 14 CFR Part 139 and applicable advisory circulars.

Manufactured by Chicago-based Airport Surface Technologies and designed for non-paved areas between runways and taxiways, AvTurf® was developed and tested specifically for airports and their environment. It has a life expectancy of 10-15 years and serves as a low-tech answer for the nation's airports seeking more efficient runways.

According to Pat Carr, president of Chicago-based Airport Surface Technologies, the patent pending product and installation process will meet and exceed mandatory federal requirements for airports. AvTurf® will increase runway safety and save millions of dollars in money lost through runway delays and airfield maintenance. "The airport of tomorrow will utilize AvTurf® now that the FAA has recognized its safety features in relation to part 139" said Carr. "Our sense is from our meetings around the world, major airports will begin the procurement of AvTurf®."

The lab testing of AvTurf® began one year ago; follow by the first-ever installation in Chicago eight months ago. AvTurf® successfully passed several tests at Midway Airport, including exposure to a jet blast, the weight of a Boeing 757 airliner and fire testing. Additionally, emergency and service vehicles totaling 80,000 pounds traversed on AvTurf® without any damage to the turf. USDA Wildlife Biologist observations show that birds failed to congregate on the surface, as they are accustomed to doing on natural turf. Carr says his team has worked hard to bring the product to a successful implementation.

"We have gone through certification inspections, disaster drills, accident investigations, maintenance and safety programs," said Carr. "With the addition of experts in synthetic fiber composition, manufacturing and installation, we have successfully pooled our ideas and experiences to design and implement the first-ever artificial turf for airports."

According to Carr, the aviation industry can anticipate site specific decreases in runway delays due to incursions, bird strikes and maintenance of these areas. "The FAA deserves credit for the recognition of a low-tech, common-sense approach to improving runway safety," said Carr who has been working with the FAA and The City of Chicago on the testing process since last summer.

AvTurf® features for improving airport safety are:

- Reduces the food source for wildlife, thus reducing bird hazards around runways and taxiways
- Increased visibility of safety areas resulting in reduced incursions
- Emergency vehicle traffic can traverse AvTurf® in any climatic condition
- Compacted to hold occasional passage of aircraft in wet or dry situations.
- Superior drainage
- Eliminates soil erosion
- No mowing involved, reducing gas emissions
- Aids in the retention of hazardous fluids
- Fire retardant characteristics