



Defrosting the Frozen Airport:

Powering Winter Airport Operations with Flight Status

It's the time of year every airport dreads: winter travel season. Airports are already heavily investing time and resources to plan for the potential impact on airport operations. From an operations perspective, there are a multitude of factors that can be compromised in the event of snow, ice or freezing temperatures. Many aviation experts point to the importance of the right equipment and the right training as keys to dealing with winter weather, which of course, is a fair assessment. However, the best airports in the world have a secret weapon for maintaining operations during severe weather: their strategic use of flight status information.

A PROACTIVE OPERATIONAL COMPANION

In the months approaching the winter season, airports are constantly practicing and developing their maintenance preparations. When the snow arrives, airport crews perform the same tasks over and over — from the critical art of de-icing aircrafts, to keeping the baggage carts, fuel and catering trucks moving from plane to plane, to the removal plans to maintain a snow and ice free environment.

Adverse winter weather conditions constantly challenge maintenance teams and contractors in their pursuit of efficiency.

For all of these operational performers, timing is critical. If a maintenance operation causes a single delay, it can have a cascading effect on the entire day (or multiple days) of flights at an airport. Understandably, the goal of airports is to limit delays and cancellations whenever possible, and the efficient deployment of airport resources is critical to that goal.

Airports that are able to proactively alert and deploy maintenance staff, de-icing teams and snow removal crews in real-time are able to stay ahead of winter weather. Accurate flight status information that can be pushed to all key parties is the foundation for effective winter weather operations.

THREE WINTER WEATHER FACTORS: ICE, SNOW AND INFORMATION

1. Ice, Ice, Baby

De-icing is just one of the many ground operational procedures that could result in an aircraft sitting longer at the gate than it needs to, eating into turnaround times and costing airlines and airports money.

Critical to passenger safety, de-icing teams have to deal with the constantly changing weather conditions. Their methods rely on a number of variables, including the amount of precipitation, the effects of humidity and temperature, wind conditions or snowfall densities.

And timing is crucial. At many airports de-icing is now performed in special areas close to the active runway to avoid the need for further de-icing after leaving the gate and to more effectively capture the run off liquid and protect the larger environment. For airport operations, balancing when the aircraft pushes back and when the de-icing begin is critical to avoid lengthy delays and lines on the tarmac. De-icing contractors and airline teams have to understand instantly which aircrafts need service, and knowing the aircraft type can help with making sure the wings, tail and leading edge flaps are all de-iced properly. That's when real-time, accurate flight status information becomes an essential part of the process. >>

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When operations are disrupted gates are moved around and aircraft are delayed, requiring additional fuelling and de-icing services. Deployment of the proper services to the correct locations becomes critical.

Every second counts for the de-icing process- the wrong gate information, incorrect landing times or the incorrect aircraft can make all the difference between an on-time flight, a delay and even a cancellation. A reliable flow of real-time flight status can help mitigate risks, ensure the teams are as prepared as they can be and aid collaboration across the entire operation. It can also play a vital role in evaluating performance and understanding where operational improvements and efficiency gains can be made.

2. Let it snow

Airports slow to a crawl in the event of a significant snow, as cargo handling, baggage carts, refuelling trucks, catering, cleaning services and everything in between all rely on being able to move around the airport.

More obviously, snowy runway conditions prevent flights from taking off.

Consistent flight status information enables better team work and effective collaboration. When planning for the next season, teams can review the data, look for opportunities to improve and create a more efficient plan.

Winter Fuel Services

Varec, a leading provider of fuel services in the aviation industry, leverages the [OAG flightview Batch data API's](#) to manage its fuel services during winter weather. This allows them to see where snow delays are impacting aircrafts and where they should be deploying their services to maintain efficiency.

For airport maintenance operations, flight schedules, fuel needs and other critical day-of-travel information will be used to determine which runways and apron areas should be plowed first.

3. Right Here, Right Now

Third party operations rely just as heavily on dynamic schedules and flight status information during winter weather, even if they are not the ones that are removing snow and de-icing aircrafts.

Managing time sensitive workflow

AvTech, a leading aviation software solutions company for managing time sensitive workflow, is able to help airports manage staffing wheelchair assistance at the right gates at the right time by using [OAG's Schedules API](#) for the most up-to-date schedules information and [OAG flightview XML](#), which provides them with flight status information for an individual airport or group of airports.

Winter weather often makes delays and cancellations unavoidable, and airports also have the important task of keeping travellers informed. Today's traveller expects immediate updates on flight status, and pushing real-time information to mobile devices improves traveler satisfaction. As a result, airports and their stretched resources can focus on operation and recovery instead of communicating with travellers.

From the largest operations like snow removal, to the smallest like wheelchair assistance, and to possibly the most important – keeping the customer informed – every airport function can be impacted by winter weather. Critical to maintaining operational efficiency and keeping travellers satisfied during challenging conditions is reliable, fast and accurate flight status data. ■

About OAG – OAG, the world's leading air travel intelligence company, provides accurate, timely and actionable flight information and applications to the world's airlines, airports, government agencies and travel-related service companies. OAG has the world's largest network of air travel data including the definitive schedules database of more than 900 airlines and over 4,000 airports. With the most extensive flight status information database in the market, OAG handles more than 52 million records of flight status updates per year, processes 1.4 billion requests and continues to deliver in excess of 35 million dynamic flight status updates daily.



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