

REFERENCE-

AIM, Paragraph 4-3-11, *Pilot Responsibilities When Conducting Land and Hold Short Operations (LAHSO)*

2-1-6. Runway Status Light (RWSL) System

a. Introduction.

RWSL is a fully automated system that provides runway status information to pilots and surface vehicle operators to clearly indicate when it is unsafe to enter, cross, takeoff from, or land on a runway. The RWSL system processes information from surveillance systems and activates Runway Entrance Lights (REL) and Takeoff Hold Lights (THL), in accordance with the position and velocity of the detected surface traffic and approach traffic. REL and THL are in-pavement light fixtures that are directly visible to pilots and surface vehicle operators. RWSL is an independent safety enhancement that does not substitute for or convey an ATC clearance. Clearance to enter, cross, takeoff from, land on, or operate on a runway must still be received from ATC. Although ATC has limited control over the system, personnel do not directly use and may not be able to view light fixture activations and deactivations during the conduct of daily ATC operations.

b. Runway Entrance Lights (REL): The REL system is composed of flush mounted, in-pavement, unidirectional light fixtures that are parallel to and focused along the taxiway centerline and directed toward the pilot at the hold line. An array of REL lights include the first light at the hold line followed by a series of evenly spaced lights to the runway edge; one additional light at the runway centerline is in line with the last two lights before the runway edge (see FIG 2-1-9 and FIG 2-1-10). When activated, the red lights indicate that there is high speed traffic on the runway or there is an aircraft on final approach within the activation area.

1. REL Operating Characteristics – Departing Aircraft:

When a departing aircraft reaches a site adaptable speed of approximately 30 knots, all taxiway intersections with REL arrays along the runway ahead of the aircraft will illuminate (see FIG 2-1-9).

As the aircraft approaches an REL equipped taxiway intersection, the lights at that intersection extinguish approximately 3 to 4 seconds before the aircraft reaches it. This allows controllers to apply “anticipated separation” to permit ATC to move traffic more expeditiously without compromising safety. After the aircraft is declared “airborne” by the system, all REL lights associated with this runway will extinguish.

2. REL Operating Characteristics – Arriving Aircraft:

When an aircraft on final approach is approximately 1 mile from the runway threshold, all sets of taxiway REL light arrays that intersect the runway illuminate. The distance is adjustable and can be configured for specific operations at particular airports. Lights extinguish at each equipped taxiway intersection approximately 3 to 4 seconds before the aircraft reaches it to apply anticipated separation until the aircraft has slowed to approximately 80 knots (site adjustable parameter). Below 80 knots, all arrays that are not within 30 seconds of the aircraft’s forward path are extinguished. Once the arriving aircraft slows to approximately 34 knots (site adjustable parameter), it is declared to be in a taxi state, and all lights extinguish.

3. What a pilot would observe: A pilot at or approaching the hold line to a runway will observe RELs illuminate and extinguish in reaction to an aircraft or vehicle operating on the runway, or an arriving aircraft operating less than 1 mile from the runway threshold.

4. When a pilot observes the red lights of the REL, that pilot will stop at the hold line or remain stopped. The pilot will then contact ATC for resolution if the clearance is in conflict with the lights. Should pilots note illuminated lights under circumstances when remaining clear of the runway is impractical for safety reasons (for example, aircraft is already on the runway), the crew should proceed according to their best judgment while understanding the illuminated lights indicate the runway is unsafe to enter or cross. Contact ATC at the earliest possible opportunity.