



For Immediate Release

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Statement by Airport Director Ricky Smith *Aircraft Diversions at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport*

The information reported in the account published by the Plain Dealer on January 21st regarding the aircraft diversions at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport was inaccurate and misleading. The article suggested that the aircraft diversions were the result of insufficient airfield pavement conditions at CLE, which is categorically untrue. At the time of the diversion, CLE was operating on one of the two main parallel runways while the other runway was being cleared of accumulated snow. The decision to clear the runway was made with the concurrence of the FAA Air Traffic Control Tower. The active runway was clear of snow and operations were normal.

Immediately prior to the aircraft diversion, visibility at CLE dropped to 1/4 of a mile in fog with clouds at 500 feet and a ceiling at 1,700 feet in overcast skies. The pilot of the diverted aircraft elected to divert to Columbus where visibility conditions were improved rather than attempting to land at CLE. That aircraft refueled in Columbus and returned to CLE within a short period of time as the visibility at CLE improved to 1 1/2 miles. Ultimately the pilot of each aircraft determines the operation of their aircraft based on the performance characteristics of that particular aircraft as well as the training and competency of the pilot.

The media statement that the runways at CLE were unacceptable for aircraft operations is false. CLE is regarded as one of the safest cold weather airports due to the efficient snow removal processes that have steadily improved over the years. CLE utilizes state of the art snow removal equipment with trained operators and has one of the highest performing aircraft deicing facilities in the country. CLE received 2.4 inches of snow during yesterday's snow event and at no time was the airport unavailable for safe operations. The diversion was related to the decision made by the pilot due to reduced visibility conditions and not the airfield conditions at CLE.