

Texting While Taxiing



The pilot who submitted the first report in this issue of *CALLBACK* has the honor of being the inspiration for this month's theme. The reporter's concept of equating electronic tablet usage during taxi to phone texting while driving, led to a search for similar events in the ASRS Database. A surprising number of such incidents, often resulting in taxiway or runway incursions, were found. Granted, taxiways are not as crowded as roads and highways, but "texting" on a laptop, tablet, FMC, or ACARS while taxiing can still lead to embarrassing and potentially dangerous consequences.

An Embarrassing Lesson

Taxiing and flying an airplane will always involve some degree of multi-tasking, but this C172 pilot learned an embarrassing lesson when the "heads-down" usage of an electronic tablet conflicted with the "heads-up" requirements of safe taxiing.

■ *We were cleared by Ground to taxi on the outer ramp area to Taxiway Bravo to Runway 22 and hold short. It's a "no-brainer" taxi route and there were no other aircraft taxiing out. I was with another pilot and was showing him the information I had available on my iPad with ForeFlight. I was showing how I had the enroute charts for our trip and then went to the checklists, also on the iPad. I was definitely multi-tasking as I taxied and demonstrated the software. I was aware of the runway area approaching but missed the hold short line until Ground said, "[Callsign], stop. Stop!" I would never dream of texting on my phone while driving, but wasn't this sort of the same thing? There was no traffic for the runway, but it was still an embarrassing lesson learned.*

Texting While Tired

Several factors led this B737 Flight Crew to miss a taxiway turn on the last flight of a long duty day. The First Officer's report includes a "texting while taxiing" factor that involved inputting data in the FMS.

■ *Ground Control told us to taxi north on Echo and hold short of Echo 11.... The intersections are not in numerical order. Still, that's no excuse and by the time we recognized the mistake, we had taxied past Echo 11. The Captain immediately stopped the aircraft and notified Ground Control. He also apologized to them. They were very understanding and told us to continue taxiing on Echo to Runway 18C....*

It was fairly congested and we missed the Echo 11 sign. I was heads-down as I finished inputting weight and balance in the FMS. It was a fairly high-workload situation at the end of a four-leg, twelve hour day.

In the future, we both need to be much more vigilant; not only in reading airport diagrams, but in staying heads-up, slowing down, and realizing that we are prone to mistakes at the end of a long day.

Texting in the Tower

Distraction due to "texting" is not a problem that only affects pilots. This Tower Controller reported that the requirement to be "heads-down" entering flight plan and route information into a Flight Data system can detract from the job of keeping an eye on aircraft and other factors affecting air traffic.

■ *I instructed Air Carrier X to taxi from the terminal ramp to Runway 8 via Taxiways Foxtrot and Mike, and to hold short of Taxiway Juliet (for an aircraft that I knew would be exiting the runway). The pilot of Air Carrier X read back the instructions at the same time that Air Carrier Y was on final reporting birds. While I was typing in the Flight Data Input/Output (FDIO) system, attempting to amend a flight plan, I looked up and observed Aircraft X on Taxiway Foxtrot, on the West side of Runway 17R, facing West. The aircraft had obviously just crossed Runway 17R at Taxiway Foxtrot. I advised the aircraft that he had gone the wrong way; instructed the aircraft to turn around (holding short of the runway), then proceeded with traffic as normal. The*

pilot made no indication that he knew he had even made a mistake. There was another landing aircraft on about a six mile final.

Maybe there should be more awareness and less complacency on the part of pilots. Just because it's a low activity time doesn't mean that the same hazards of collision do not exist.... The same goes for Controllers. Also, amending just one flight plan requires "heads-down" time as does amending routes. This takes away (since we work Local/Ground/Flight Data combined a majority of the time, no matter what the traffic situation is) from the Controller's ability to spot those pesky "little things" like flocks of geese on final, jets crossing the runway, etc.... Combined positions are a very poor practice, requiring the Local Controller to take his eyes out of the air and away from the runways and aircraft, to perform required duties of two other positions at the same time.

Driver Goes Through a "Stop Sign"

The First Officer of an MD-80 series aircraft was "texting" to accommodate a runway change when the Captain "drove" past the hold short line and onto an active runway.

■ We were told to taxi to Runway 12.... We had planned on a Runway 8L departure. After clearance was received from ground, we re-briefed a Runway 12 via Papa taxi. When we were both clear on the instructions, we started our taxi on Taxiway Papa. The Captain stated he had the taxi under control down Papa to Runway 12. I then diverted my attention inside the cockpit to change the box to match



Runway 12 not 8L. I was "heads-down" when the Captain drove the aircraft onto Runway 12 at Intersection Sierra.

Before I realized the situation, it was too late. We crossed the hold line and onto an active runway.

The Captain stated that a lack of proper signs in that area led to the mistake. I have been to that area of the airport and no one has ever made the mistake to veer off Taxiway Papa. That is why I was changing the box early to be more heads-up later in the taxi. Never losing track of your position is the best solution to this event.

Off Road Excursion

An extra pair of eyes on the taxiway might have helped this B767 Captain keep the aircraft "on the road."

■ I was taxiing on the ramp area leading up to the taxiway and initiated a right turn to enter onto the taxiway. Halfway through the turn I felt a shudder and side load that did not seem normal. I stopped the airplane and asked the First Officer to contact Tower and Maintenance to tell them of our situation. Maintenance informed me that the right main gear was partially on the taxiway and partially on the grass. After realizing that we were stuck, I informed the passengers and Flight Attendants of the situation as well as Operations.

The First Officer was "heads-down" inputting ACARS data and receiving the load close out when the incident occurred. Lesson learned: two "heads-up" are better than one.

ASRS Alerts Issued in July 2012	
Subject of Alert	No. of Alerts
Aircraft or Aircraft Equipment	3
Airport Facility or Procedure	8
ATC Equipment or Procedure	3
TOTAL	14

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July 2012 Report Intake	
Air Carrier/Air Taxi Pilots	3918
General Aviation Pilots	1359
Controllers	868
Cabin	296
Mechanics	211
Dispatcher	118
Military/Other	19
TOTAL	6789