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Asset Management Approach to Airfield Inspections Helps Airports Navigate FAA Regulations

Airports are ever-changing, fast-paced environments, where managers are expected to make decisions based on sound information and verified data trends. However, many airports are still employing manual recordkeeping methods that frustrate data dissemination and analysis.

Woolpert is helping large, medium and small airports—both commercial and general aviation—implement effective asset management strategies through proven technologies to help operate airports efficiently.

These tools enable commercial service airports to readily comply with the Federal Aviation Administration's 14 CFR Part 139: Certification of Airports, to improve operations and maintenance collaboration, and to accurately document processes.

One such tool, the Electronic Logging System (ELS), was pioneered by Chicago O'Hare International Airport in 1997, adopted by other commercial service airports and acquired by Woolpert in 2014.

George Lyman, managing deputy commissioner for the Chicago Department of Aviation, said ELS was created to help O'Hare maintain and search records in a digital format.

"We used to do everything in ledger books; we had stacks and stacks of ledger books, and it was very time-consuming to find the information we needed," Lyman said. "From day one, we knew ELS was something that would grow over time. In fact, it's grown more than initially thought. Once people throughout the airport saw what the system could do for them, they wanted to add to it."

The ELS mobile map tool, GEO, ensures that operations, maintenance and engineering collaborate via a common asset inventory.

This shared workflow provides tools to identify, track, repair and document irregularities.

"This gives us a visual representation of what kind of work orders are issued in the airfield," Lyman said. "It works in a push-pin type fashion, where someone can go to the GEO Tool to identify if an irregularity still exists."

Aaron Frase, technical coordinator for airside operations at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, agreed the mapping function is key.

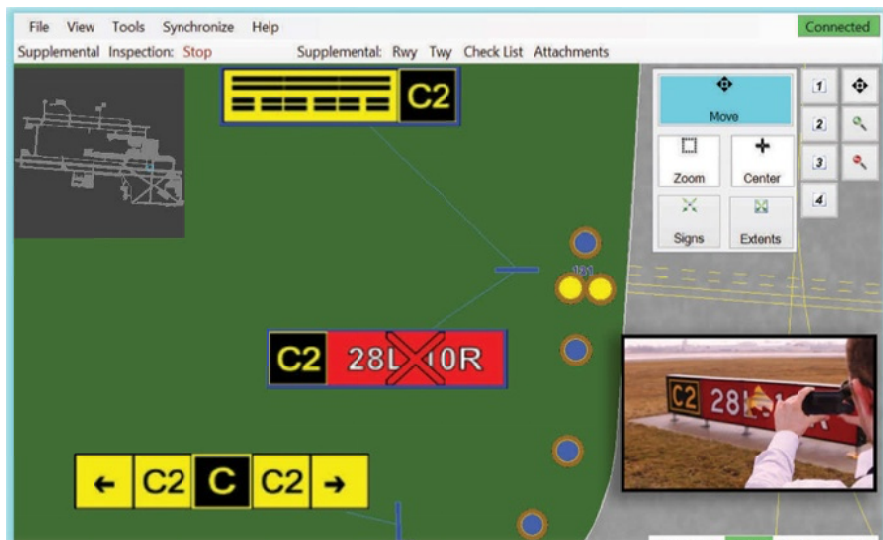
"If you're just looking at raw data, you won't notice where the trends are," Frase said. "When you have a set of data geo-referenced to the field, you can see where to focus resources to solve that issue. ELS can create reports that list issues and it serves as a good communication device between departments."

The next iteration of this software, Airport Safety Manager (ASM), will provide web-based, GIS accessibility to data, improved mapping and analytics to visually identify trends and issues, and track items for safety analysis.

"We are looking forward to making the advanced airfield inspection toolset and workflows available to more airports with different needs," said Tom Mochty, Woolpert senior vice president and aviation market director. "Woolpert recently deployed a Cityworks Asset Management solution at Rockford (Ill.) Airport, and has been able to configure workflows and requirements created for large airports to airports with smaller and less specialized staff, but with similar management objectives."

Woolpert also is testing a direct integration of the FAA's new NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) system, as well, and O'Hare is working to develop a tool to automate the inspection of the bolts for the airport's in-pavement light fixtures.

"There are more and more FAA regulations every day, which creates more and more paperwork," Lyman said. "But anytime you can make information available and automate the steps involved, it will help people. With ELS, what used to take weeks now takes a couple of days. A lot of us would be lost without it at this point."



Woolpert's Electronic Logging System has a mobile map tool, GEO, that allows airport operations and maintenance staffs to identify issues in the field, such as this broken runway sign (inset).



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