

# Landing on Closed Runway

## FAA Departs from Sanction Guidance Table by John T. Van Geffen



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'What the hell is this? I was supposed to have unlimited airspace.'"

In a recorded conversation with Lee Williams, an FAA Quality Assurance Specialist, Airport Manager Marshall Reece tore into Inhoffe's piloting. "I've got over 50 years flying, three tours of Vietnam," Reece said, "and I can assure you I have never seen such a reckless disregard for human life in my life." He then added, "Something needs to be done. This guy is famous for these violations."

One air traffic controller offered a concise account of Inhoffe's flying: "N115 Echo Alpha landed right in the middle of them doing their work on runway 1331 and damn near killed somebody out there."

Instead of revocation or, at the very least, suspension, the Senator agreed to "complete a program of remedial training." The FAA also issued a warning letter.

Says Inhoffe: "I have completed the program required by the FAA, and this matter is over."



**Background:** A pilot lands his aircraft on a closed runway. Aside from the big "X" at each end of the runway, the closure is NOTAMed. Construction workers and their equipment and vehicles are on the runway. The FAA investigates and the pilot tells investigators "I don't have time to read NOTAMS".

**Question:** Does the pilot get revoked or just suspended, and if the latter, for how long?

**Hint:** The FAA Sanction Guidance Table, FAA Order 2150.3B, Appendix B, (Fig. B-3-j) Careless or reckless operation so as to endanger, provides a 30 – 60 day suspension for landing on, or taking off from, closed runway. (Fig. b-3-h(4)) Other Flight Violations, provides a 30 – 90 day suspension for failure to obtain pre-flight information.

**Answer:** Neither.

Huh? Please explain....

Last year, U.S. Senator James Inhoffe landed his Cessna on a closed runway at a Texas airport, forcing construction workers to run for cover as the Senator aircraft 'sky hopped' over them and six vehicles.

A FOIA request into the matter released FAA documents showing how Inhoffe chose to land on the main runway at the Cameron County Airport on October 21, 2010 despite being aware that it was closed and had a large 'X' on its threshold.

During a call from one of the on-scene workers to the FAA, Inhoffe's landing "scared the crap out of" workers and "damn near hit" a red truck. "I think he actually wet his britches, he was scared to death. I mean, hell, he started trying to head for the side of the runway. The pilot could see him, or he should have been able to, he was right on him."

How did Inhoffe approach the on-site workers tending the runway he wanted to land on?