LEXINGTON PLANE CRASH

On August 27, 2006, a Comair flight at Blue Grass Airport in Lexington, Kentucky attempted to take off from Runway 26 instead of Runway 22. The fully loaded aircraft needed over 5000 feet of runway to become airborne, but the runway was only 3500 feet long. The aircraft crashed past the end of the runway after it was unable to achieve sufficient lift.

Paving work was being performed at the airport, so barricades blocked the normal taxi route to Runway 22. The pilots confused the alternate taxi route and lined up on Runway 26. The pilots did not verify the compass heading inside the aircraft which matches the number on the runway (22 is 220 degrees from North). The pilots may have believed they were on the correct runway since the center-line lights on Runway 22 were off because of construction.

What's the Problem?

1. Paving work was being performed at the airport, so barricades blocked the normal taxi route to Runway 22. The pilots confused the alternate taxi route and lined up on Runway 26. The pilots did not verify the compass heading inside the aircraft which matches the number on the runway (22 is 220 degrees from North). The pilots may have believed they were on the correct runway since the center-line lights on Runway 22 were off because of construction.

Why did it happen?

2. The plane crashed because it was unable to achieve the velocity necessary for liftoff on the short runway. While this basic Cause Map is accurate, more detail must be revealed to find the most effective solutions to prevent a similar incident at any airport.

What will be done?

3. All of the causes had to combine in just this way for the incident to occur. Controlling any one of the causes had the potential to prevent the plane from crashing.

- Pilot or co-pilot could have checked the runway number.
- If the sun was up, the shorter runway would have been visible.
- Pilots confused the alternate taxi route and lined up on Runway 26.
- Controller didn't realize aircraft was on Runway 26.
- Controller didn't verify runway pre-flight.
- Controller didn't notice plane on short hold line.
- Pilots had no visual of short runway.
- Pilots anticipated no center-line runway lights.
- Controller didn't watch plane begin take-off.
- Only one controller on duty.
- Controller not required to watch take-off.

Understanding the system of causes reveals different ways to significantly reduce the risk of a similar incident occurring.

For a free copy of our Root Cause Analysis Template in Microsoft Excel, used to create this page, visit our web site.