

Southend Airport ready for the worst of winter

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Snow ploughs ready for action at Southend Airport

WHATEVER the worst of the British weather throws at us passengers flying from Southend are highly likely to still take off from Southend.

[Southend Airport](#) has the kit and procedures in place to ensure flights can come in and leave despite fog, snow and ice.

When the snow caught everyone by surprise in early December and roads came to a standstill the airport functioned well with just one departing flight delayed by an hour.

The runway was kept clear and flights taking off while Stansted Airport's runway had to be closed for two hours.

In October thick fog caused some disruption over two days with some diversions to incoming easyJet flights and Aer Lingus cancelled its services.

However a whole team of workers are quickly rallied when bad weather strikes to deal with the situation and keep planes and passengers flying.

Airport managing director [Alastair Welch](#) said: "Southend Airport has a very good weather record for many years we have taken diversions from a number of airports. We do our very best on those occasions to minimise disruption to passengers."

The airport has two vehicles which are able to clear snow from the runway by sweeping it with brushes as well as smaller vehicles to clear the stand for the planes and walkways.

Snow can not be allowed to build up in walls at the side of the runway it has to be blown and distributed over the airfield.

Ice can also cause major problems on runways and aircraft so the airport has two de-icers on site.

Salt used on roads can never be used on runways as it is corrosive to planes so an anti ice treatment is used on the ground and de icers sprays on the planes.

The kit is all run by the staff who service the aircraft and are already on site . Also the airport fire service is responsible for clearing the runway.

In fog there are procedures in place which determine whether an aircraft can land in fog.

There is a decision height at around 200ft from half a mile away where if there is a clear indication of the runway and a predetermined runway visual range - which measures visibility between two locations at either end of the runway - is met then it is safe to land.

If not then an aircraft can hold in the air for it to clear or will divert.

Southend often takes diversions from Farnborough, Luton and London City airports.

It is less strict for takeoff as the manoeuvre can be made in low visibility as it is overseen by the control tower and radars.

As the airport is redeveloped additional lighting is being put in.

Mr Welch added: “When there is bad weather forecast there is a snow plan put in place and a snow cell team of us meet regularly to monitor the situation. “It is teamwork and it seems to work well here.”

The airport is looking ahead to even busier times having seen its runway extension finished new terminal and hotel and easyJet start flying from there last year (2012).

The terminal extension is underway and due to be finished in May.

Mr Welch said; “It’s been an important year for us with much more happening. “Our passenger levells have surpassed the record of 1967 with 690,000 people using the airport.. We’re looking forward to our next new service running to Venice from February and finishing the terminal extension.”