

JUL 14 2011

By [Signature] Deputy

620019203

**PETITION OF THE  
THIEF RIVER FALLS AIRPORT AUTHORITY  
FOR MPCA PERMIT**

The Thief River Falls Airport Authority is the governing body of the Thief River Falls Regional Airport. Thief River Falls is a city of approximately 8500 people, located in Northwest Minnesota. It is the largest community in Northwest Minnesota, and is considered the regional center. The airport has four passenger flights per day, five cargo flights per day, countless student flights from the University of North Dakota, and numerous flights of private planes from the general public. In addition, the airport houses the emerging UAS maintenance program for the Northland Community and Technical College.

Numerous local businesses rely upon the airport. Digi-Key Corporation, which employs over 2,500 people in Northwest Minnesota, relies heavily upon the airport to transport its cargo/packages. In 2010, over 1.5 million packages from Digi-Key alone were shipped through the airport. Other businesses in Thief River Falls and the surrounding area use the airport for commercial purposes, including such businesses as Artic Cat, Inc., Mattracks, Central Boiler, etc.

The primary runway of the airport (13-31) is in need of repair. Cracking of the runway is of such extent that it is believed that the sub base of the runway is deteriorating. The cracking of the runway creates foreign object debris (pieces of asphalt) and poses serious safety risks to airplanes. This primary runway, which is one of only two runways of the airport, is the only runway allowed for commercial services.

In July 2010, the airport received a letter of correction from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) indicating in part:

*The pavement on Runway 13-31 appears to be severely cracking in various locations and producing debris. This pavement condition will require mitigation through crack sealing to maintain the surface until the scheduled pavement replacement in 2012. (See attached Letter of Correction.)*

The cost of crack sealing would be approximately \$250,000.00. Not only does the airport not have the funds for that, it appears to be a waste of money because of the requirement of pavement replacement the year immediately following.

Further, the Minnesota Department of Transportation submitted the attached memorandum, indicating the best option would be to proceed with the pavement replacement. The memo quotes in relevant part:

*The second method would be to mill six inches of asphalt and then do full-depth recycling (FDR) stabilized with asphalt emulsion, followed with six inch overlay. This option would destroy the current cracked pattern, and would give many years of performance. If the current traffic stays the same, this would be my first choice. I strongly recommend using the proper performance grade (PG) of asphalt binder to slow development of new cracks. The new pavement with regular preventive maintenance (crack sealing) should last 15-20 years.*

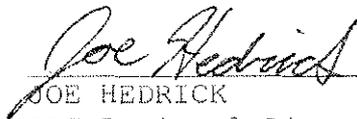
The airport endeavored to obtain grants for the runway pavement replacement project. They were able to obtain 1.6 million dollars from FAA, and promised that an additional 4.4 million was reserved, for this project. This grant was received on June 27, 2011. The airport was then able to enter into a contract with Knife River

Materials for this work, on July 1, 2011. The project requires a permit from MPCA for which Knife River applied on July 8, 2011. Paul Aasen, Commissioner of MPCA, has stated to Rep. Dan Fabian that he is authorized and/or empowered to grant the permit, but is unwilling to do so during the state shutdown.

Knife River, the contractor for this runway pavement replacement project, has indicated that they would need to begin work no later than July 18, 2011, if the project is to be completed this year. Unless FAA reverses it's prior findings and rulings, or unless the work is completed, it is likely that FAA would withdraw it's navigational aids, essentially shutting down the airport.

It is the goal of the airport to obtain the MPCA permit. If this means funding that part of the MPCA in charge of issuing permits, that needs to be done. The airport is vital to Northwest Minnesota. The loss of the airport could mean the loss of many jobs, and otherwise harm the already fragile business climate. Furthermore, and more importantly, this is a safety issue for the airplanes utilizing the Thief River Falls Regional Airport.

Date:



JOE HEDRICK  
TRF Regional Airport Manager  
TRF Airport Authority  
P.O. Box 672  
13722 Airport Drive  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701

# Letter of Correction

-365424631

1. Airport Manager (Name) Mr. Mark Borseth		4. FAA Airport Certification Safety Inspector Alberto Rodriguez	
2. Airport Name Thief River Falls Regional Airport	Site Number 11024.A	5. FAA Office Airports Division, AGL-621.2	
3. Address (Street or PO Number, City, State, ZIP Code) PO Box 528 Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701		6. Address 2300 E. Devon Ave. Des Plaines, IL 60018	
7. Type of Operating Certificate Class I		8. Certificate Date I A S 05/1973 // 4/8/2005	
9. Type of Airport Certification Safety Inspection <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Periodic <input type="checkbox"/> Surveillance		10. Inspection Date 7/12/2010 - 7/14/2010	
11. FAA Contact Alberto Rodriguez	e-mail address: alberto.rodriguez@faa.gov	Phone: 847-294-7626 Fax: 847-294-8088	12. EIR Number 2010 GL 8 0
<p>Inspection of the above named airport has revealed that it is not in compliance with all of the requirements of FAR Part 139, the Airport Certification Manual/Specification, and the Airport Operating Certificate.</p> <p>We have given consideration to all available facts and concluded that this matter does not warrant legal enforcement action. In lieu of such action we are issuing this letter which will be made a matter of record. We will expect your future compliance with the regulations. Please advise, by return of this form, when discrepancies are corrected.</p> <p>The individual identified in item 11 must be notified if corrections are not completed by the agreed upon date.</p>			
13. FAR Part 139 Violations Noted			14. Discrepancies Corrected <i>(To be completed by Airport Personnel)</i>
a. FAR 139 Reference	b. Discrepancy	c. Correction Date	a. Date      b. By (Initials)
.305(a)(3)	Paved areas.	5/31/2011	
<p>The pavement on Runway 13-31 appears to be severely cracking in various locations and producing debris. This pavement condition will require mitigation through crack sealing to maintain the surface until the scheduled pavement replacement in 2012.</p>			

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if Comments/Recommendations attached - comments and recommendations concerning aviation safety which are not required by FAR Part 139 are noted on the attached sheet.	
By signature below, assurance is given that the violations noted above will be corrected by the dates indicated and a copy of this letter returned by 15 calendar days following the completion of all discrepancy corrections.	
Date July 14, 2010	Signature of Authorized Airport Official  Signature of FAA Airport Certification Safety Inspector  Alberto Rodriguez



## Memo

Office of Materials and Road Research  
1400 Gervais Avenue, Mail Stop 645  
Maplewood, MN 55109

Office Tel: 651/366-5573  
Fax: 651/366-5461

**TO:** Cathy Huebsch,  
**CC:** Jerry Geib, Peter Buchen, Dan Boerner, & Erland Lukanen  
**FROM:** Thomas J. Wood

**DATE:** November 8, 2010  
**SUBJECT:** Thief River Falls Airport Runway Review.

On November 1<sup>st</sup> I had the opportunity to review the Thief River Falls Airport. The main runway is an asphalt pavement approximately 12 inches thick full depth over variable base materials. The last over lay was placed 16 years ago. The reason for the review was to help determine what the best method to improve the condition of the runway. The main issue the runway is suffering from severe cracking. See pictures below. The asphalt away from the cracks is aged and pocked. It is starting to lose aggregate due to loss of fines. The options available in my opinion are the following:

1. Mill three (3) inches and overlay three (3) inches. I do not think this is the best option because the cracks are cupping, average basin of the depressed pavement close to three (3) feet wide. I stepped on some of the pavement alongside the cracks and I could see the pavement depress under my weight. This tells me that the asphalt at the cracks is stripping and losing strength. If mill and overlay goes forward, to fix runway I would recommend doing some test pits over cracks to determine how bad the asphalt is. My best guess is that within two (2) to five (5) years the cracks would be back and as bad as they are now.
2. The second method would be to mill six (6) inches of asphalt and then do full depth recycling (FDR) stabilized with asphalt emulsion followed with six (6) inch overlay. This option would destroy the current crack pattern and would give many years of performance. If the current traffic stays the same this would be my first choice. I strongly recommend using the proper performance grade (PG) of asphalt binder to slow development of new cracks. The new pavement with regular preventive maintenance (crack sealing) should last 15 to 20 years.
3. The third options is to mill off six (6) inches of the existing asphalt and then do FDR stabilized with asphalt emulsion for the remaining asphalt. Pave the stabilized base with eight (8) inches of concrete pavement. This would give the owners a 50 to 60 year fix that in my opinion could handle any increase in traffic and size of planes using airport.



