



Sydney Airport Curfew Factsheet

FACTSHEET

Purpose of the Curfew

The Sydney Airport curfew was put in place to minimise the impact of aircraft noise on nearby residents. A limited number of aircraft movements are allowed during the curfew, but all aircraft operating during the curfew have to take-off or land over Botany Bay. This directs aircraft away from the city and reduces the impact of aircraft noise on residents living to the north, east and west of the airport.

The Legislation

Sydney Airport has a curfew governed by the following legislation:

- [Sydney Airport Curfew Act 1995](#) (the Act); and
- [Sydney Airport Curfew Regulations 1995](#) (the Regulations).

The curfew applies to aircraft operations between 11.00pm and 6.00am (local time). The Act allows the Department of Infrastructure Regional Development and Cities (the Department) to permit operators to take-off or land during the curfew (a curfew dispensation).

What can operate?

The curfew does not prevent all aircraft movements during the curfew period. It limits aircraft movements between 11.00pm and 6.00am by restricting the types of aircraft that can operate, the number of flights permitted and the types of operation allowed. A limited number of international passenger jet aircraft are also permitted to land between 5.00am and 6.00am during the northern hemisphere summer months. These are called curfew shoulder movements (see below). These exceptions enable a number of vital aviation services to be provided while limiting the effect of aircraft noise during curfew hours. On average, there are eight aircraft movements per night during curfew hours.

Emergency Aircraft and Aircraft Emergencies



The vital, often life-saving operations carried out by emergency services aircraft, including police, medical and search and rescue aircraft are too important to stop operating during the curfew.

In addition, any aircraft which declares an emergency is allowed to land during the curfew, however, that aircraft is not allowed to resume its interrupted flight during the curfew.

Photo courtesy of Paul Sadler, Australian Aviation Express

This includes flights where the aircraft does not have enough fuel to divert to another airport, or where the aircraft needs to land to ensure the safety of the aircraft or anyone on board.

Low Noise Heavy Freight Aircraft



Overnight air freight services operate on a quota system under the Act which allows a maximum of five take-offs and 24 landings per week by operators using the British Aerospace BAe 146 low-noise jet aircraft.

These aircraft carry perishable produce and items which require urgent delivery times.

Photo of BAe 146 aircraft courtesy of Air Charter Network

Business Jets

A list of approved business jets are permitted to operate during the curfew to provide connections not available on regular public transport flights due to curfew restrictions or traffic constraints.

Approved business jets must have a maximum take-off weight (MTOW) of less than 34,000kgs and meet the latest international noise standards. On average, there are 14 business jet movements per month during the curfew.



Photo courtesy of Air Charter Network

Small Propeller-Driven Aircraft

Small (less than 34,000kgs) propeller-driven aircraft that meet international noise standards are also permitted to operate. Many of these aircraft are engaged in providing regional transport connections and overnight freight.



Example of a small propeller-driven aircraft

Curfew Operating Conditions

During the curfew, all aircraft must use the main runway and operate over Botany Bay and non-populated parts of the Kurnell Peninsula. Aircraft depart to the south over Botany Bay, and arrive over Botany Bay, landing to the north.

Aircraft are not allowed to take off to the north over the city after 10.45pm. On Saturdays and Sundays, aircraft must also operate over Botany Bay from 6.00am-7.00am and 10.00pm-11.00pm, providing the weather and traffic conditions allow this to take place safely. These operating conditions direct aircraft away from the city and reduce the impact of aircraft noise on residents living north, east or west of the airport.

Curfew Shoulder Movements

From April to October some international aircraft schedules are moved forward to meet curfews at overseas airports which begin earlier in line with changed summer time zones. As a result, a limited number of international aircraft arrivals are allowed in the morning curfew shoulder period between 5:00am-6:00am. The Regulations allow for a quota of 24 weekly arrivals, but no more than five per day. There are currently three airlines operating seven days per week and one airline operating three days per week under this arrangement.

Curfew Dispensations

In exceptional circumstances, an operator may apply to the Department for approval to take-off or land during the curfew (a curfew dispensation). All requests for permission to take-off or land are made through a Curfew Duty Officer who will assess the situation in relation to a set of criteria which must be met before permission to take-off or land can be granted.

Three primary criteria must be met for permission to take-off or land at Sydney Airport:

1. The circumstances are immediate in origin (e.g. they occurred at the time of preparing to depart from, or commencing a flight to arrive at, Sydney Airport).
2. Of such character that they could not reasonably have been foreseen (e.g. mechanical fault, passengers who fail to board requiring baggage offload etc.)
3. Not reasonably able to be met by alternative arrangements (e.g. flight cancellations, using other aircraft, or other modes of transport).

When all three of these criteria are satisfied, the following matters may be taken into account to determine whether permission to take-off or land should be granted:

- By what margin the movement falls into the curfew period (i.e. whether shortly after 11.00pm or shortly before 6.00am).
- Whether the cause of the delay is within the control of the operator.
- The noise level of the aircraft.
- Number of passengers involved.
- The severity of the likely hardship.

The Department conducts regular briefings with airlines to ensure that staff are well aware of the curfew regulations and procedures for applying for permission to take-off or land during the curfew.

When permission to take-off or land is granted at Sydney Airport a report giving the reasons for granting permission must be tabled in both Houses of the Federal Parliament within five sitting days.

Use of Reverse Thrust during Curfew Period

Aircraft landing during the curfew and international aircraft landing during the curfew shoulder period do so on the condition that they do not use reverse thrust at greater than idle speed. Any breach of this condition must be reported to Airservices Australia (Airservices) or via the Department's website within seven days. Reverse thrust is where an aircraft applies a form of braking using the engines, which will slow the aircraft quickly but will also create higher levels of noise.

Missed Approaches during the Curfew Period

If the pilot of an aircraft landing during the curfew period makes a missed approach, the operator must lodge a missed approach return providing relevant details of the event to Airservices or via the Department's website within seven days. A missed approach occurs when a pilot is unable to land safely due to either a change in wind direction or another aircraft still being on the runway when coming into land.

Take-offs after Curfew

If an aircraft is granted permission to commence its taxi (meaning the aircraft can move under its own power) to the runway by Air Traffic Control prior to 11.00pm, it is allowed to take-off after 11.00pm without requiring permission from the Department.

For More Information

This fact sheet is intended as a guide. For detailed criteria on operations, please review the [Act](#), the [Regulations](#) and the [Dispensation Guidelines](#) on the Department website: [Curfew Information for Sydney Airport](#)