TALL TOWER

Presented to: FPAW
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Date: November 11, 2005
ISSUE

• The United States observes visibility from two locations when there is a ATCT and a human observer (Not LAWRS)
• Surface visibility is always reported by machine or CWO
• Tower visibility is reported by the controller when either visibility is less than 4 miles
• Current reporting practice makes the lower of the two prevailing and reported in the body of the METAR/SPECI
ISSUE CONTD

- Affected airports have towers over 200 feet and many over 300 feet
- Common decision height is 200 feet
- Tower cab may be in clouds with greatly reduced visibility, below minimums
- Surface visibility and ceiling may meet or exceed minimums
- A/C may not be able to shoot approach
- Dispatch may not be permitted
DISCUSSION

- United States in only State in ICAO that reports tower visibility this way
- Visibility in body of METAR/SPECI, whether surface or tower, is designated prevailing
- NWS prepares forecasts based on prevailing visibility
- Airlines required to operate on the prevailing visibility
- Surface visibility usually more indicative than tower visibility of what pilot will see at decision height
POSSIBLE SOLUTION, ONE

• Change weather reporting to conform with ICAO SARPs
• Always report surface visibility in body of METAR/SPECI (prevailing)
• Report tower visibility in REMARKS when either is below 4 miles
POSSIBLE SOLUTION TWO

• Have NWS forecast to surface visibility no matter where it appears in the report
POSSIBLE SOLUTION THREE

- Amend FAA directives to secure changes in procedures to allow:
  - A/C to shoot approach based on surface visibility
  - Dispatch A/C based on surface visibility