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Correspondence on the subject of
this letter should be addressed to

THE SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF CIVIL
AVIATION. _____

and should quote the reference

Your ref. _____

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION,
ARIEL HOUSE,
THEOBALDS ROAD
LONDON, W.C.1.



November, 1952.

The Commandant, Blackbushe Airport

Mr *McBouville* representing *Pattis News*

has

permission to be present at the FIDO test-burn for

(~~reporting~~)
(~~photographing~~) the test.
(~~filming~~)

V. Alford

Chief Information Officer

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION

ARIEL HOUSE, THEOBALDS ROAD, W.C.I.

CHANCERY 3366

Extn. 500

PRESS NOTICE

No. 673

November, 1952

FIDO TEST-BURN AT BLACKBUSHE AERODROME, CAMBERLEY.

NOTES FOR THE PRESS.

A system of fog dispersal (FIDO) was developed during the war for the assistance of RAF aircraft landing in poor visibility conditions. In this system petrol at low pressure was fed along pipes and through simple nozzles; it was ignited wet and did not produce full heat output until the petrol had been burning for some 15 minutes. After cessation of hostilities, the majority of these systems were no longer maintained, but it was finally agreed that two FIDO systems should be available to civil aircraft - one to be operated by the RAF (Manston) and the other by MCA (Blackbushe).

FIDO AT BLACKBUSHE

Blackbushe was the only civil aerodrome equipped with a FIDO installation and its proximity to the London terminals made it a convenient site for the MCA system. The installation was repaired and an operating crew recruited, the first test burn being carried out on 4th March, 1948. The system at Blackbushe was made available as from September 1948, although Manston had been made available for civil aircraft since October 1947. The only operational use of the FIDO installation at Blackbushe took place on the 20th November, 1948, when a Viking aircraft of a charter operator took off carrying an urgent consignment of currency for West Africa.

The availability of FIDO at Manston and Blackbushe was promulgated by Notam and the conditions for its use were as follows:-

"They would be lit only in emergency and the Minister reserved the right to investigate each case in which FIDO was operated. No extra charge, in addition to the normal landing fee, would be made when FIDO was used in the case of genuine emergency, but, if the

/investigation

investigation showed that the emergency could have been avoided by sound planning or airmanship, the aircraft operator was liable to be called upon to meet the full costs of the operation of the installation."

The cost of landing one aircraft on either of these systems would have varied between £625 as a minimum and £1500 as a normal maximum.

On the 1st April, 1949, the FIDO system at Blackbushe was withdrawn from service, since it was considered that the cost of the maintenance of two FIDO systems in the South of England was not justified. The Manston installation continued to be available for civil aircraft and this position still holds good. MCA decided in September 1950 that the Blackbushe installation should be dismantled but the installation has now been overhauled by Air Ministry. It is now being tested by R.A.F. operators prior to being placed on a care and maintenance basis. During this test-burn a number of take-offs, overshoots and landings will be made by civil aircraft to assess pilot and passenger reactions to FIDO. The aircraft taking part include a BEA Elizabethan, a BEA Viking, a BOAC York and a Dove of MCA Flying Unit.

FIDO AT LONDON AIRPORT

During the initial construction of London Airport for the RAF, some provision was made on No. 1 runway for the installation of a low pressure petrol burning fog dispersal system similar to that developed during the war. Concrete troughs were provided across the runways and taxiways intersecting with No. 1 runway to take the burner and supply pipes. Foundations were laid for the petrol tanks in a position between the northern taxiway and the Bath Road, and a certain amount of piping was installed.

The technical and economic factors involved in installing FIDO at London Airport are, however, very complex and are being studied in consultation with technical experts and airline operators.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Development work by the Ministry of Supply on an alternative system is continuing.