



Adverse Weather

Operational Safety Instruction

Low Visibility Operations

07th September 2026

ASWeather_OSI_052

Version 3.0

It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure that relevant OSIs are brought to the attention of their staff. However, individuals remain responsible for their own actions and those who are in any doubt should consult their Supervisor or Manager.

1. Introduction

1.1 Heathrow is equipped to support aircraft operations in low visibility conditions down to ICAO Category III B minima through the use of the Instrument Landing Systems (ILS). To ensure the continued safety of aircraft operations during periods of reduced visibility, additional safeguards and operational restrictions are required across the manoeuvring area. These measures include protecting the ILS Sensitive Area from interference by aircraft and vehicles, thereby maintaining the integrity of navigation signals used by arriving and departing aircraft. Low Visibility Operations therefore introduce specific controls and restrictions on airside activities to support the safe movement of aircraft. Further details regarding Category II/III operations are contained within the UK Aeronautical Information Publication (UK AIP).

1.2 All airside companies must ensure that staff who drive on the airside manoeuvring area understand the meaning of the term '*Low Visibility Operations*'. Staff must understand the safety implications, the associated restrictions placed on them, and any special procedures or precautions that must be adopted when Low Visibility Safeguarding and Low Visibility Procedures are in force. These requirements must be covered and emphasised during 'M' ADP training and reinforced through company training and competence programmes for manoeuvring area drivers.

1.3 This OSI should be read in conjunction with the reference documents as stipulated therein, if applicable. All current OSIs can be found via the link [here](#) or via the Quick-response (QR) code below.



1.4 Red bars have been added to the side of the document to draw the reader's attention to where changes have been made.

1.5 In this document, Heathrow Airport Limited/HAL has been changed to Heathrow. To avoid repeated red bars, none are added for this change in this document.



1.6 ASWeather_OSI_052 v 2.1 is hereby cancelled from date of publication of this OSI.

2. Definitions

Abbreviation	Description
ACE	Airport Control Engineer
AIP	Aeronautical Information Publication
AOP	Airport Operations Plan
AfDM	Airfield Duty Manager
AFRS	Airport Fire & Rescue Service
AODM	Aircraft Operations Duty Manager
AOU	Aircraft Operations Unit
APOC	Airport Operations Centre
ATC	Air Traffic Control
GSA	Glidepath Sensitive Area
HOEC	Heathrow Operational Efficiency Cell
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
ILS	Instrument Landing System
IRVR	Instrumented Runway Visual Range
LSA	Localiser Sensitive Area
LVO	Low Visibility Operations
LVP	Low Visibility Procedures
M ADP	Manoeuvring Area Airside Driving Permit
NATS	National Air Traffic Services

3. Airfield Weather Safeguarding

3.1 For the purpose of this document, the use of the terms;

3.1.1 ‘*Low Visibility Operations*’ (LVO) is a general term used for airside operations in conditions of reduced visibility.

3.1.2 ‘*Low Visibility Safeguarding*’ is the process carried out by Heathrow at the request of ATC, which prepares the airfield for Low Visibility Procedures. This results in the introduction of restricted access to the manoeuvring area and the protection of the ILS Sensitive Areas.

3.1.3 ‘*Low Visibility Procedures*’ (LVP) are the actions carried out by ATC in respect of aircraft operations. This results in further restrictions on access to the manoeuvring area, the protection of the ILS Sensitive Area, and a reduced aircraft movement rate.



4. Criteria for Low Visibility Operations

4.1 Low Visibility Safeguarding will come into force when:

- 4.1.1 The **IRVR is 1000 metres** and expected to fall below 600 metres or,
- 4.1.2 The **cloud ceiling is 300 feet** and expected to fall below 200 feet.
- 4.1.3 ATC may also initiate Low Visibility Safeguarding when the Meteorological Office forecast fog or when the observed weather indicates imminent LVP conditions.

4.2 Low Visibility Procedures will come into force when the **IRVR is 600 metres or less**.

5. Activation of Low Visibility Operations

5.1 ATC is responsible for the activation and cancellation of Low Visibility Operations.

6. Activation of Low Visibility Safeguarding

6.1 ATC will inform the following agencies when Low Visibility Safeguarding is requested.

- 6.1.1 Heathrow Airside Operations
- 6.1.2 Heathrow AODM
- 6.1.3 Heathrow APOC Operations Lead Co-ordinator
- 6.1.4 Heathrow Engineering Operations APOC
- 6.1.5 Metropolitan Police (Heathrow)
- 6.1.6 Appropriate sections within NATS

6.2 The Heathrow APOC Operations Lead Co-ordinator will inform other APOC stakeholders and Heathrow AFRS.

6.3 Heathrow Airside Operations, Heathrow AOU & Heathrow Engineering Operations will activate the processes necessary to 'safeguard' the airfield through phone calls, radio communication, Airport Community App, and AOP, etc. This includes:

- 6.3.1 Informing other nominated Heathrow airside departments and personnel.
- 6.3.2 Informing all airfield companies holding 'M' or 'R' category driving licenses that 'free ranging' on the manoeuvring area has been restricted (see section 7 below).
- 6.3.3 Works parties being asked to vacate the manoeuvring area, at the discretion of the Heathrow AfDM.
- 6.3.4 Entering a message on AOP stating 'Low Visibility Safeguarding in Force'.
- 6.3.5 Carrying out a visual inspection to ensure that the runway is protected and that CAT II/III bars are illuminated.
- 6.3.6 Setup the Heathrow power network for Low Visibility Procedures.





- 6.4** When Low Visibility Safeguarding is complete, Airside Operations will inform ATC.

Note: Low Visibility Safeguarding must be in place before Low Visibility Procedures commence.

- 6.5** Whilst Airside Operations implement Low Visibility Safeguarding, the ATC will make the following broadcast every 5 minutes until Airside Operations confirm that Low Visibility Safeguarding is in place:

'Restricted Free Ranging in force, all non-essential vehicles vacate the manoeuvring area.'

- 6.6** Vehicles other than those listed (see 7.1 below) must then make their way off the manoeuvring area at the earliest opportunity.

- 6.7** All drivers are reminded that dipped headlights must be used at all times, regardless of whether low visibility operations are in place or not.

- 6.8** As part of the process to alert airfield users to the status of the airfield, Heathrow Campus Security will display signs stating 'Low Visibility Operations in Force' at all control posts that give access to the airfield.

7. Activation of Low Visibility Procedures

- 7.1** Low Visibility Procedures are introduced by ATC when the weather conditions fall below the criteria described in section 3 of this Instruction. When declaring Low Visibility Procedures, ATC will inform the following;

- 7.1.1** Heathrow Airside Operations
- 7.1.2** Heathrow AODM
- 7.1.3** Heathrow APOC Operations Lead Co-ordinator
- 7.1.4** Heathrow Airport Control Engineer (ACE)
- 7.1.5** Metropolitan Police (Heathrow)
- 7.1.6** Appropriate sections within NATS

- 7.2** The Heathrow APOC Operations Lead Co-ordinator will inform other APOC stakeholders and Heathrow AFRS.

- 7.3** Heathrow Airside Operations and Heathrow AOU will then inform all relevant airfield companies that all remaining vehicles must vacate the manoeuvring area unless under positive ATC

- 7.4** When Low Visibility Procedures come into force, and at 10-minute intervals for 30 minutes, ATC will make the following broadcast;



“All vehicles, except Airside Operations vehicles, must vacate the manoeuvring area immediately unless carrying out essential operational tasks under direct ATC control.”

- 7.5 Vehicles other than those operated by Heathrow Airside Operations must withdraw from the manoeuvring area immediately, unless under positive ATC control.
- 7.6 Users must note that Low Visibility Safeguarding and Low Visibility Procedures are not the same:
 - 7.6.1 Low Visibility Safeguarding is the preparatory stage implemented to protect the airfield and restrict free ranging, with only *specified vehicles* permitted to remain on the manoeuvring area (**see 8.1 below**)
 - 7.6.2 Low Visibility Procedures are the full ATC-controlled stage in which further restrictions apply and all vehicles, except *specified Heathrow Airside Operations vehicles* or those undertaking essential operational tasks under positive ATC control, must vacate the manoeuvring area immediately (**see 9.1 below**)

8. Low Visibility Safeguarding Restrictions

- 8.1 When Low Visibility Safeguarding is in force, ‘free ranging’ is suspended with the exception of those listed below;
 - 8.1.1 Heathrow Airside Operations
 - 8.1.2 Heathrow AFRS
 - 8.1.3 Airline/Ground Handlers Aircraft Tugs
- 8.2 All other free ranging vehicles **must vacate** the manoeuvring area unless carrying out essential operational tasks and are under direct ATC control.
- 8.3 Heathrow AFRS and Aircraft Tugs are restricted to the taxiways shown in **Appendix A** during Low Visibility Safeguarding.
- 8.4 The list of Heathrow vehicles approved to drive on the manoeuvring area during Low Visibility Operations is maintained by Airfield Operations.
- 8.5 Contractors, engineering, and survey teams will be withdrawn from the manoeuvring area when Low Visibility Safeguarding is implemented.
- 8.6 Uncontrolled crossings must not be used in visibility of less than 150 metres. As a general guide, a driver must not use an uncontrolled crossing if, when stationary at the double white lines, the buildings beyond the other side of the crossing cannot be seen clearly.



- 8.6.1** When necessary, an Airside Operations Leader vehicle will be provided at key uncontrolled crossings. Crossings without the required visibility but not manned by a Leader vehicle will be closed by Airside Operations using barriers.

9. Restrictions During Low Visibility Procedures

- 9.1** When Low Visibility Procedures are in force, further restrictions on 'free ranging' are imposed. All remaining vehicles except for specified Heathrow Airside Operations vehicles, must vacate the manoeuvring area unless carrying out essential operational tasks and **under positive ATC control**.
- 9.2** The continued deployment of Airside Operations vehicles will be kept under review by the Heathrow AfDM.

10. Remote Holding During Low Visibility Operations

- 10.1** Aircraft remote holding is not regularly permitted during low visibility operations. To remotely hold an aircraft during Low Visibility Safeguarding or Procedures, an approval **must** be obtained from the Heathrow AfDM and coordinated via the HOEC as per ASGrOps_OSI_037 Aircraft Remote Holding Procedure at Heathrow.

It should be noted that approval may be refused due to ATC workload.

11. Runway Holding Points Restrictions During Low Visibility Safeguarding/Procedures

- 11.1** ATC will utilise CAT II/III holding points whenever Low Visibility Safeguarding or Procedures are in force.

12. Responsibilities of Airside Companies

- 12.1** All airside companies are to ensure that airside staff are trained and understand the requirements of Low Visibility Operations and that appropriate information is contained within Company Instructions/Manuals.

13. Cancellation of Low Visibility Operations

- 13.1** ATC will cancel Low Visibility Procedures when weather conditions improve on those detailed in section 4 of this Instruction and advise those referred to in section 6.1. Airside Operations, AOU & Heathrow Engineering Operations will reverse the actions carried out in section 8.



Note: The airfield may remain reverted to Low Visibility Safeguarding although Low Visibility Procedures are cancelled. ATC will inform Airside Operations by telephone whether safeguarding remains in force, and if so, whether CAT I or CAT II/III holding points will be in use.

- 13.2** ATC will request that Airside Operations cancel Low Visibility Safeguarding when weather conditions improve above those stated in section 4 of this Instruction, Airside Operations will reverse the actions carried out in section 6.

14. Enquiries

Any questions concerning this instruction should be addressed to the Heathrow AfDM by telephone 07771 838 052 or airfield.duty.manager@heathrow.com.

15. References

- 15.1** ICAO Category 3B limits
15.2 UK Aeronautical Information Publication, AD 2-EGLL



16. Appendix A: Free-ranging Areas in Safeguarding

Visibility 600m – 1000m, cloud ceiling <300ft.

Free ranging suspended, with the exception of Heathrow Airside Operations, the Heathrow AFRS and airline/handlers' aircraft tugs. The AFRS are restricted to areas marked in blue unless they are responding to an emergency under blue lights. Aircraft tugs are restricted to areas marked in blue.



Document History

Revision	Description of Change	Date
v1.0	Initial version	27 th October 2017
v2.0	Amendments to content including AOP addition and reference to driver taring/authorised vehicles	02 nd Sept 2020
v2.1	Updates on runway holding points restrictions during Low Visibility Safeguarding/ Operations and Appendix A	13 th April 2023
V3.0	NATS have corrected remote holding fact. Difference between Safeguarding and Procedures, clarified. Requirement to seek an AfDM's approval before remotely holding an A/C during LVP/Safeguarding. LV Safeguarding and LVP stage and implementation have been explained. Aerodrome Manual reference updated.	29 th August 2026

