



Airport safety week focuses on trash

ROBYN IRONSIDE

If security trays are the least hygienic part of an airport, runways may be the cleanest.

Twice a day, every day, runways at major Australian airports are vacuumed, swept and inspected to ensure there is nothing that could be ingested into an aircraft engine.

Surrounding areas are also carefully monitored for foreign objects and debris that could pose a hazard.

Adelaide Airport chief executive Mark Young said the procedures were all rigorously adhered to in the interests of safety, which has been in the spotlight during this Airport Safety Week.

"Safety is something that's taken into account every single moment of every single day that we are operating, and safety week

is an opportunity to bring a heightened focus to it," Mr Young said. "It's an opportunity to try some different initiatives and keep that safety message at the forefront of everyone's minds, including businesses that operate at the airport, contractors and employees."

One initiative undertaken by a number of airports was a "foreign object debris" walk, involving staff who do not normally work airside to raise awareness of potential hazards.

"FOD awareness is something that every airport undertakes on a daily basis, but safety week is a chance to make it a bit more high profile," Mr Young said. "You'd be surprised at what you find airside. You get all manner of things out there, blowing off the apron or the back of containers."

From rocks and tyre fragments, to plastic bottles and errant boarding passes, all items were removed from the runways, taxiways and ramps as soon as they were spotted.

Mr Young said involving staff in the FOD walk who were not

normally exposed to airside operations was part of safety week's "walk in my shoes" theme.

"It's about trying to understand the operations and the business of the airport from someone else's perspective," he said.

"Understanding how someone else operates and what their work involves can help in communication and can also help in safety awareness."

Australian Airports Association chief executive Caroline Wilkie said more than 150 airports and aerodromes across Australia and New Zealand were taking part in this year's safety

week, which was first held in 2014. "Airports have hosted a variety of events including tours of the airfield, air traffic control towers and aviation rescue fire-fighting," Ms Wilkie said.

"Participants are also finding out how different roles contribute to safety in many different ways such as biosecurity, customs and aerodrome reporting officers."

And while runways and other infrastructure are kept scrupulously tidy, a recent European study shed a surprising light on the most germ-riddled areas of airports. Data collected from Helsinki Airport in Finland found security trays harboured a variety of germs as a result of being constantly handled by passengers and staff.

Other areas to be wary of were the handrails of stairs, and the eftpos machines in retail outlets.



JAMES ELSBY

Adelaide Airport staff member Joanna Arnautovic searches for rubbish that could become runway hazards