



Memorandum

U.S. Department of
Transportation

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Audit Announcement -
Wildlife Hazard Mitigation Program
Federal Aviation Administration
Project No. 11A3008A000

Date: March 15, 2011

From: Jeffrey B. Guzzetti 
Assistant Inspector General
for Aviation and Special Program Audits

Reply to
Attn. of: JA-10

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

The January 2009 bird strike that caused the crew of US Airways flight 1549 to land in the Hudson River increased public interest in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) wildlife mitigation program. Public interest remains high due to recent wildlife strikes. For example, on February 28, 2011, Continental Airlines flight 1559 experienced an engine failure and made an emergency landing after the aircraft struck birds during departure from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. On November 8, 2010, the crew of Horizon Airlines flight 2306 declared an emergency after a bird strike substantially damaged the aircraft's right wing during approach to Los Angeles International Airport.

These events demonstrate a serious aviation safety issue, but the threat of aircraft collisions with wildlife¹ is not new. From 1990 to 2008, FAA reported more than 89,000 wildlife strikes, with birds accounting for more than 97 percent. Data show that the number of wildlife strikes is on the rise, increasing from 1,759 strikes in 1990 to 9,474² in 2009. Since 1997, FAA has provided approximately \$387 million in Airport Improvement Program funds to airports nationwide for projects to help assess and mitigate wildlife hazards.

Accordingly, we plan to review FAA's implementation of its Wildlife Hazard Mitigation Program. Our objectives are to assess the effectiveness of FAA's (1) policies and guidance for monitoring, reporting, and mitigating wildlife hazards;

¹ Birds are not the sole wildlife problem for aircraft. Non-avian wildlife such as deer, coyotes, and alligators can wander onto runways, creating serious problems for departing and landing aircraft.

² Since wildlife strike reporting is voluntary, it is estimated that these numbers represent about 20 percent of the strikes that occurred from 1990 to 1994 and 39 percent from 2004 to 2008.

(2) coordination with Federal, state, and local government agencies responsible for reducing wildlife hazards; and (3) oversight and enforcement of airports' adherence to wildlife hazard reporting, assessment requirements, and implementation of wildlife hazard management plans.

We plan to begin the audit the week of March 21, 2011, and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-0500 or Scott Macey, Program Director, at (415) 744-0434.

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cc: FAA Chief of Staff
Anthony Williams, AAE-001
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