

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**Federal Aviation Administration**

Aspen Tower  
0150 W. Airport Rd.  
Aspen, CO 81611

Issued: 12/11/2018 1902 (UTC)Aspen Tower

Effective: 12/12/2018 1200 (UTC)  
Letter to Airmen: LTA-ASE-5

Subject: Wrong Surface Landings

Cancellation: 12/12/2020 1200 (UTC)

Aircrews should exercise caution in order to avoid misidentifying the soft surface west of the airport as runway 15.

On January 7, 2018, a Falcon Jet landed on the frozen sod west of and adjacent to the runway. Fortunately, there were no injuries and no damage to the aircraft.

Investigation of the incident included conversations with the crew involved as well as other aircrews operating that day. Several individuals reported visual illusions and possible confusion with the landing surface and the area adjacent to it. Further review and discussion revealed an anecdotal history of similar events in the past.

A team of stakeholders convened to determine mitigations in order to prevent future occurrences. The team determined that immediate mitigations include this Letter to Airmen and daytime operation of runway lights during winter months.

Aircrews should expect runway lights to be operated on a middle setting during daylight hours. If that is contrary to pilot desires, notify the tower controller and the lights will be adjusted accordingly.

Inform ATC if you experience any similar visual confusion so we can continue to identify and mitigate the risk of wrong surface landings.

An aircrew, not associated with the referenced incident, took the attached photograph on the same day as the incident. The red line indicates the runway; the green line indicates the sod west of the runway.

Wayne Hall  
*Air Traffic Manager, Aspen Tower*

