



Introduction

ADB SAFEGATE inset light fixtures are engineered with a low protrusion height to minimize the risk of damage during snow plowing, compared to medium or high protrusion alternatives. Select fixtures offer reinforced prisms (see [Reinforced Prisms](#)) or sapphire prisms for increased scratch resistance and extended product lifetime.

Consistent adherence to airport winter operations guidelines is essential to protect in-pavement airfield ground lights from snow plow damage. This manual provides a summary of key airport operator specifications and additional recommendations to help prevent damage to inset lights throughout winter operations.

- FAA AC 150/5200-30D – Airport Winter Safety and Operations
- FAA AC 150/5220-20A – Airport Snow and Ice Control Equipment
- FAA AC 150/5340-26C – Maintenance of Airport Visual Aid Facilities
- FAA EB85 – Ductile Snow Plow Protection Ring and Installation Procedures
- ACRP Report 123 – A Guidebook for Airport Winter Operations

Winter Operation Training

Many airports conduct dry-run winter operations training ahead of the winter season. To maximize safety and efficiency, we recommend performing tests and simulations on designated sections of taxiways or runways that are equipped with the relevant fittings. This proactive approach helps identify potential issues early, minimizing the risk of damage to airfield luminaires and maintenance vehicles during snow plowing.

Attention:

Pay special attention to inset light fixtures with glass domes, especially if the dome is unprotected or set higher than standard fixtures due to omni-directional requirements. A direct hit from a snowplow blade can damage the glass dome and must be avoided.

Set the snowplow blade height high enough to prevent contact with the glass dome, even under snow pressure. Always adjust and check snowplow equipment during training and operations to reduce the risk of damage to these fixtures.

Preparation

You can take some steps before snow or ice removal to make the process easier:

- **Anti-icing chemicals:** Before precipitation forms, use only approved anti-icing chemicals to prevent strong ice bonds and assist with melting. Ensure pH does not exceed 11.
- **Pre-heating:** Switch on in-pavement lights at maximum intensity 30–40 minutes prior to removal. This helps melt snow and ice and reduces fixture damage.

Snow and Ice Removal Practices

A combination of snow plows, rotary runway brooms, de-icing chemicals and blowers should be used for comprehensive snow and ice removal.

Snow plows:

- Adjust the blade to maintain a small distance above the pavement surface, minimizing contact with in-pavement lights.
- Reduce vehicle speed for added protection.

Rotary runway brooms:

- Use rotary brooms to remove residual snow from in-pavement light fixtures for a thorough finish.

De-icing chemicals:

- Use only approved de-icing chemicals to break down the ice structure, lower its freezing point and cause it to melt. Ensure pH does not exceed 11.

For detailed guidance, see [Snow Plows](#), [Rotary Brooms](#) and [De-Icing Chemicals](#).

Note: For frequent snow removal, high-strength steel snow plow rings are recommended to better absorb impact and protect aluminum alloy in-pavement lights. For detailed design and installation information, consult FAA Engineering Brief 85.

Inset Lights

Snow Plows

Snow plow angle and speed:

- Limit plow speed to 40 km/h or less; when crossing over in-pavement fixtures, reduce to below 10 km/h or lift blades.
- Maintain movable segment mechanics; adjust and control plow angles per manufacturer recommendations.
- If frequent prism damage occurs, adjust the snow plow swivel angle to better align with the vehicle's driving line.
- Adapt settings to temperature and snow quantity, following supplier recommendations.

Cutting edge material and structure:

- Equip snow plows with plastic cutting edges made from polyurethane, rubber, or similar materials.
- Regularly check for wear and abrasion marks; replace worn down plastic immediately. Avoid exposure of metal portions.



Figure 1. Well-aligned plastic cutting edge

- Ensure plastic segments are well-aligned and free of vertical or horizontal steps, which increase risk of luminaire damage.



Figure 2. Signs of wear on plastic cutting edge

Cutting edge height:

- Set the plow blade/cutting edge slightly above ground level (10–15 mm clearance) when stationary.



Figure 3. Cutting edge without clearance

- Remaining snow/ice should be removed with rotary brooms or approved chemicals.
- Use casters, shoes, or support wheels to maintain clearance during operation; avoid steel wheels and protruding bolts with less than 20 mm clearance.



Figure 4. Snow plow with support wheels

Inset Lights

Rotary Brooms

Rotary runway brooms play a vital role in both snow and ice removal, helping to maintain a connected airfield for smarter, data-driven decision making.

- **Snow removal:** Rotary brooms are highly effective at clearing snow from in-pavement light fixtures, often outperforming plow blades in removing the final layers.
- **Ice removal:** The type of broom used is critical. In some cases, brooms may "polish" the ice, which can reduce runway traction. Select broom types carefully for ice removal operations.

Bristle selection and maintenance:

- Bristles are available in steel or poly varieties.
 - **Steel bristles** cut through ice but can accelerate wear and scratching of glass prisms, impacting light photometry.
 - **Poly bristles** are ideal for flipping or wiping away snow with minimal impact on fixtures.
- To reduce wear and damage, avoid using steel bristles when possible, or use a mix of steel and poly bristles (e.g., one-third steel).
- Always check for adequate contact pressure, especially during pre-winter dry-run tests.
- Inspect bristle wear according to manufacturer recommendations and replace brooms as needed. Worn bristles become stiffer and can significantly increase wear on light fixtures, particularly the prisms.
- Avoid using silica or glass sand. If their use is necessary, remove as soon as operational conditions allow and use rotating brushes at low speed.

De-Icing Chemicals

In some cases, chemicals may be necessary to remove compacted snow from in-pavement light fixtures. To protect your airfield equipment, we recommend using these solutions sparingly. Excessive chemical application can increase the risk of damage to both the fixtures and underground electrical components, leading to additional maintenance and costs. For best results, ensure that chemical solutions do not exceed a pH value of 11. This precaution helps safeguard your lighting systems and supports dependable, long-term airside operations/

Ensure pH value does not exceed 11 to safeguard lighting systems and minimize additional maintenance.

ADB SAFEGATE light fixtures are tested to work with common airfield chemicals, including:

- Potassium Acetate
- Potassium Formate
- Sodium Acetate
- Sodium Formate

Reinforced Prisms

Using reinforced prisms, such as "sapphire™" prisms available in the AXON range, can significantly extend maintenance intervals. These prisms are approximately four times harder than standard glass, offering increased durability when steel brushes are required. While not scratch-proof, sapphire prisms can help increase service life and reduce maintenance frequency.