

Go arounds



A go around is a procedure adopted when an arriving aircraft on final approach aborts landing by applying take off power and climbing away from the airport. It is a set procedure to be followed by the flight crew in the event of an aircraft being unable to land. The procedure is published so that Air Traffic Control (ATC) and the pilots can anticipate where the aircraft will fly following the decision to go around.

What are the reasons for a go around?

There can be various reasons for a go-around. These include:

On the ground a previously landed aircraft may be slow to vacate the runway, a departure may be slow to take off after receiving take off clearance or the runway may be closed for inspection by Airfield Operations personnel following a report of debris or other contamination.

In the air a pilot may report a temporary technical problem that would prevent landing or passengers may not be seated, in which case the cabin is regarded as being insecure. Adverse weather conditions, such as crosswinds can also cause a go around.

In the event of a go-around, if another aircraft is involved, for example, a departure has just taken off, the Air Traffic Controller must ensure that the two aircraft are safely separated. This separation is achieved by turning one of the aircraft.

In most cases the instruction to turn is given to the following aircraft – the one carrying out the go around. This is particularly significant when the aircraft going around is faster than the departure in front, as safe separation can be rapidly eroded.

This map shows a go around. Please note that whilst there are set procedures for go arounds from each runway, aircraft can be directed elsewhere by ATC in the interests of safety and for separation from other aircraft.

A go around may be the reason if you see or hear a plane close to the airport, where you do not usually see them.



Go around from runway 09Left (easterly operations)

Is a go around safe?

A go around is perfectly safe procedure. It is well practised and designed to prevent a dangerous situation arising. ATC procedures allow Air Traffic Controllers to confidently predict the path to be followed by an aircraft with the minimum of further instructions and they will take into account other traffic in the vicinity when considering the instructions to issue. While Heathrow Airport Limited encourages airlines operating at the airport to fly to the best possible environmental standards, safety must have priority. Go arounds do not compromise this, so any sanctions are considered inappropriate.

How often do go arounds happen?

During 2008 our Flight Evaluation Unit was notified of 415 go arounds which equated to 0.31% of the total arrivals at Heathrow.

Go arounds

Our other factsheets

Please see out other fact sheets which provide information on:

- Arrivals
- Departures
- Aircraft stacks
- Night flights
- Aircraft noise on the ground
- Heathrow and helicopters
- The legal overview.

Further information

If you would like further information, please contact the Flight Evaluation Unit:

By telephone: 0800 344 844

By e-mail: noise_complaints@baa.com

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Website: Make an enquiry on our website:
www.heathrow.com/noise

Please note that the freephone telephone number is an answerphone. Please leave you name, contact details and brief details of your enquiry. A member of the FEU will contact you as soon as possible.