

Runway Incursion vs. Excursion – What Is The Difference?

Accidents/incidents that occur at airports can often be classified as either:

- a) a **runway incursion**
- b) a **runway excursion.**

Runway incursions

The FAA defines a runway incursion as:

“Any occurrence at an aerodrome involving the incorrect presence of an aircraft, vehicle, or person on the protected area of a surface designated for the landing and take-off of aircraft.”

In simple words a **runway incursion** occurs when an aircraft, vehicle, pedestrian or animal inadvertently enters an active runway.

Runway incursions are categorized separately to ‘surface incidents.’

Runway excursions

A runway excursion, on the other hand, is an incident in which an aircraft leaves the runway surface / makes an inappropriate exit from the runway. This can either be in the form of veering off to the side, or overshooting the end of the runway / overrun from (off) the runway surface (that is where an aircraft is unable to stop before it reaches the end of the runway).

The FAA states that:

“These surface events occur while an aircraft is taking off or landing, and involve many factors ranging from unstable approaches to the condition of the runway.”

In simple words a **runway excursion** occurs when an aircraft departs the runway in use during the take-off or landing run. The excursion may be intentional or unintentional.

Types of Runway Excursion

- A departing aircraft fails to become airborne or successfully reject the take off before reaching the end of the designated runway.
- A landing aircraft is unable to stop before the end of the designated runway is reached.
- An aircraft taking off, rejecting take-off or landing departs the side of the designated runway.