

STATEMENT of
CAPTAIN John Lien

I was the Captain of Alaska Flight 27 which operated from Chicago to Seattle on December 19, 2015. I have been employed as a pilot at Alaska Airlines since March, 1998 and have 21882 flight hours. I have about 11800 hours in the Boeing 737 aircraft. I was the pilot flying this flight. We arrived SEA at approximately 8:30 in the morning, about 30 minutes after sunrise, and the sun was relatively low on the horizon and the sky was partly overcast. The weather was 2000-3000 foot layers of scattered and broken clouds.

Everything during the descent and approach was normal. Once I completed a scan and all the checklist items for our arrival phase, I turned the autopilot off at about 10,000 feet. We flew the GLASR-9 arrival and were cleared for the ILS approach to 16R as expected and briefed. Just inside 5 miles, the tower offered 16C which had just opened the prior day and we accepted.

We were at approximately 1300 feet and had the runway environment in sight at that time. My interpretation was of three runways; 16L, 16C and 16R and lined up to land on, what I believed was 16C as we were cleared for. It's important to note that these runways (and taxiway Tango) were wet and reflected the morning sun, whereas 16L and the terminal area were in a shadowed area and not readily visible.

I was confident with my approach as we continued to touchdown with a good landing and rollout. I realized my error soon after touchdown and continue still to this day, to "reflect" upon that moment. The wet pavement with the reflecting sun and the spacing of the three runways were, in my view, factors in this unintentional error. The distance from 16L to 16C is much less than the distance between 16C and 16R. Given the reduced visual conditions due to the glare at the time we landed, it is easy to believe that 16C is the left runway with taxi Tango being the middle runway. These factors and the dynamic environment that we fly in have the potential to lull a flight crew into making the kind of error similar to our incident.

In terms of what could be done to prevent a recurrence, I would suggest that just because it is official daylight in Seattle doesn't mean you can see everything clearly. The runway lead-ins were off but it would be prudent that they remain on in the early morning hours, as if they had been on, this incident may have been prevented.

Sincerely, John Lien



