

# P E R F O R M A N C E

*From great companies come great ideas.*



*An Aviation Consultancy*

## AIRFIELD LIGHTING — SECOND IN A SERIES OF MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

The development of airfield lighting and nighttime navigation aids by the U.S. Postal Service in the 1920s was a visionary step. It enabled seamless coast-to-coast air transportation, which was previously considered impossible.

Until the early 1920s, air travel was limited to daylight hours only. Travelers and cargo had to transfer to surface transportation at night, which was time consuming and logistically difficult. The U.S. Postal Service, in particular, needed a faster and more efficient means to transport mail across the country.

In 1921, the U.S. Postal Service launched an ambitious program that redefined the aviation industry. By installing airway beacons and runway lighting systems at strategic waypoints and airfields across the country, it became possible to take off, navigate, and land at night. In 1925, the U.S. Postal Service introduced overnight airmail service between New York and San Francisco. Scheduled nighttime passenger service followed soon thereafter.

Currently, the more than 400 commercial-service airports in the United States alone rely on runway lighting systems, and every day thousands of commercial flights operate to destinations all over the world. The U.S. Postal Service's vision of nighttime flying was truly a defining moment in the development of today's modern air transportation system.

### **RICONDO & ASSOCIATES, INC.,** *an Aviation Consultancy*

20 NORTH CLARK STREET, SUITE 1500  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602 USA

TEL: +1 [312] 606-0611 • FAX: +1 [312] 606-0706

info@ricondo.com • www.ricondo.com • AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Photo courtesy of Chicago Department of Aviation.



1. Route of the transcontinental air mail service bringing letters from New York City to San Francisco with 36-hour service

2. A refueling stop in Ohio

3. An early team of air mail aviators circa 1925

4. Close-up of a field flood light at Omaha, Nebraska (1924)

Historical images courtesy of Jesse Davidson Aviation Archive.