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Airports Get Aid for Device to See Debris

By **MATTHEW L. WALD**

The Federal Aviation Administration is taking steps toward helping airports buy equipment that will spot dangerous debris on their runways.

The agency published an advisory circular on Sept. 30 that lays out the specifications the equipment must meet. The systems can use cameras or radars, and be fixed or mobile. Airports can apply for federal grants to buy systems that meet the specifications, setting the stage for the first systems to be in place next year.

The agency's action comes more than nine years after the crash that started the quest for debris-seeking technology. In that accident, a strip of metal from a preceding flight shredded a tire on an Air France Concorde. Rubber fragments flew against the underside of the wing so forcefully that they put holes in the fuel tank and ignited a fire as the plane took off. The plane crashed, killing all 109 people aboard and four people on the ground.

An Israeli company, XSight Systems, installed a system at Logan International Airport in Boston and tested it through two winters. Alon Nitzan, president and chief executive of the company, said that at the time of the crash, "The entire industry begged for a tech solution, including the regulators."

Several other companies offer debris detection systems, including QinetiQ and Stratech.

Xsight sells through distributors; Mr. Nitzan said the Pentagon was one customer.