

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports October/November, 2008

Pine Mountain Lake Airport Safety Meeting

I have been working with Harlow Voorhees, the FAA Safety Team representative for the Pine Mountain Lake Airport on a town hall style airport safety meeting that will be held on Wednesday, November 19th at 1:00 PM at the Groveland Community Hall. The purpose of this meeting is to review and raise awareness of our Pine Mountain Lake Airport traffic patterns, procedures, communications, and weather characteristics. Additionally, there will be a discussion on the deer problem in which individuals can express their ideas on what can be done to reduce the impact of the deer on our airport. Other airport safety topics identified by the public will also be discussed.

The purpose of this town hall style safety meeting is to share safety information with the airport users and for the Airports Department and the FAA to obtain input from the public regarding safety issues. This meeting is not for the purpose of making any decisions. It will be a time when individuals can voice their safety concerns as they relate to the maintenance and operation of the airport. Harlow Voorhees, from the FAA Flight Standards District Office will be the moderator however; there will be other participants there, including myself, to answer questions that may be raised by the audience.

I should note that pilots located within a 50 mile radius of Pine Mountain Lake Airport received an email notice of this meeting through the FAA. Also, a meeting notice has been sent to those people on my Manager's Approach email distribution list.

Seating in the Groveland Community Hall is limited, so those planning on attending the meeting should sign up on the FAA's website at:

http://www.faasafety.gov/SPANS/event_details.aspx?eid=21649.

However, if you don't sign up through the FAA's online registration, you are still welcome to attend the meeting.

PML Airport Runway Closure

The runway at Pine Mountain Lake Airport will be closed on Wednesday, November 12 from 12 noon until 3 PM for asphalt repair. The taxiways and ramp will still be operational. If you have any questions regarding this closure please contact my office at 533-5685.

New Columbia AWOS Online

The upgraded Columbia AWOS is fully operational after a few commissioning problems. One of the new features of this AWOS is that the manufacturer All Weather, Inc. can monitor the system via the telephone system. This way they can analyze a problem before they send a technician to Columbia Airport to repair the system. I believe this feature alone will reduce the down time of the system.

Another benefit of the new AWOS is that it can be accessed over the internet. Doing so will allow the viewer to see the exact same screen we have in our office. The website for the AWOS is:

<http://awos.co.tuolumne.ca.us/>

If you enter the web address directly into the address line in your browser, don't use

“www” because this site is not on the “world wide web”. All you have to type in is “awos.co.tuolumne.ca.us”.

Looking forward, I’m investigating the possibility of getting the AWOS to transmit its data to the National Weather Service through a NADIN connection. If this can be accomplished, then the Columbia METAR will be available to the FAA, online flight planning programs and to XM and WSI weather services. Stay tuned for progress reports on this effort.

Columbia Tetrahedron Color

I have received a few complaints that the tetrahedron at Columbia Airport is very difficult to see because the orange color does not provide enough contrast with the gray rock used inside the segmented circle. My research has found that the FAA does not specify a color for a tetrahedron. The FAA does recommend that fabric on windsocks should be white, yellow or orange. Using this as a guideline, a Columbia Airport volunteer painted the tetrahedron white. So the next time you visually check the winds from the traffic pattern you should be looking for a bright white tetrahedron.

New Hangar Progress Report

Gold Country Hangars has submitted their FAA 7460-1 forms which are the Notice of Proposed Construction to the FAA’s San Francisco Airports District Office. These forms must be submitted a minimum of 30 days before the proposed construction is to start, however the FAA has had the submittal for 4 weeks now and has indicated it will take them another 4 weeks to complete their review.

Understandably, Gold Country Hangars does not want to submit their building plans to the County until the FAA has blessed the project because the FAA may require changes in the design. Still, it is felt that this delay will not impact the overall project schedule. We are still looking at having hangars built by the end of next summer.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Checking NOTAMS and TFRs

I have to congratulate our pilots for doing a good job at checking for VIP Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) during the recent election season. There were no phone calls to my office from Oakland Center or Norcal Approach requesting that I have the pilot of an aircraft that just landed to call ATC (Air Traffic Control). When I receive this kind of phone call it usually means that the aircraft just flew through a TFR and had been tracked on radar to Columbia Airport.

Checking TFRs and NOTAMS is an important part of a pilot’s preflight responsibilities that can keep pilots out of trouble or prevent an unscheduled detour to another airport. TFRs can “pop up” when a wildfire starts, when an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) is operating, or when the president, vice-president, or VIP is visiting the area. Most of the time, the advance warning of these TFRs is just a few hours or less. Also, runways are sometimes closed for maintenance, or an entire airport is closed for an air show. In the case of an air show, there is usually plenty of advance warning, and often the airspace over the airport may be closed.

Fortunately, the campaigning, fire, and airshow seasons are over, but we can still have UAV activity over Beale AFB. Pilots still need to stay alert for runway closures, too. Stay alert, do a thorough preflight, check NOTAMs and for TFRs. These will go a long way towards keeping your pilot’s license below the FAA’s radar screen.

The Manager’s Approach is a monthly publication from the Tuolumne County Airports Director for the purpose of keeping our community informed of local aviation and airport issues. You can contact me at:

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