

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Airport Security

Every person that has taken a commercial airline flight since 9-11 knows that we live in a changed world. Airports with scheduled airline service had to implement security measures dictated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). So far small GA airports like Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake have been spared the costly and restrictive security requirement of the larger airports. Count ourselves lucky so far, but unfortunately this situation is most likely to change.

At every airport conference I have attended, there has always been a session on airport security. Big business is getting into it, Homeland Security has money to spend, and the public fear factor is easy to exploit. Do you see a logical outcome?

Although I have performed a DHS evaluation of our airports and found them to be a very low risk to our nation's security, I have chosen to implement the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association (AOPA) Airport Watch Program which is endorsed and accepted by both DHS & TSA as an acceptable program for our airports.

Over the next several issues of the Manager's Approach I will be writing about the various aspects of this program and how all pilots and aircraft owners can participate to help keep our airports secure and also help us delay mandated security measures.

CIP Funds At Risk

Those pilots that subscribe to online aviation news digests such as AvWeb or ePilot may have read that President Bush's new budget proposes cutting the spending for airport

improvements by nearly a billion dollars! While this budget only becomes law after Congress plays their political games and gets the President's concurrence, the outlook is not good for small airports.

Ninety-five percent of the funding for our airport improvements is through the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. A billion dollar cut in available funding will severely affect our local airport projects. In all likelihood, most of the available FAA grant money will go to large metropolitan airports that have commercial airline service, a large population base, and significant political clout. If this happens, the installation of a fire protection water line, a taxiway extension, a perimeter access road, or drainage improvements at a foothills airport won't even show up on the FAA's CIP radar screen. The blip will be just too small and too far away.

Our two airports depend on the FAA AIP grant program. I urge the Tuolumne County aviation community to learn more about this potentially bad situation and to take action by voicing their concerns to our elected officials at all levels of government.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

I consider myself a pretty even keeled individual, but the news of the aircraft crashing into the house in Roseville, north of Sacramento, got my blood pumping harder than it had in months. The stupidity of one pilot resulted in not only his own death, but the death of two innocent people and a potential backlash all GA pilots are going to feel in the months and years to come.

General Aviation pilots and aviation enthusiasts make up only a small minority of

the US population. These are no longer the days of Charles Lindberg's great flights and the budding days of aviation when hearing or seeing an airplane fly over was the exception and not the norm. In those days the US was much more rural and aircraft were scarce. Now, more than ever, the general public is annoyed with aircraft flying over their homes, their cities and their recreation areas.

These last 4 weeks have been terrible for general aviation in California and have dealt a significant blow to our image. Let's look at what has happened.

- San Jose - Aircraft lands on I-680
- Carlsbad – Jet runs off end of runway
- San Diego - Mid air where debris fell on a residential area
- Oakdale - Aircraft crash near Airport
- Roseville - Aircraft crashed while doing aerobatics over residential neighborhood

The Roseville event is going to stand out as the perfect example how one individual can impact the privileges for many, even though such accidents very rarely occur. As proof of this, the number of phone calls I have received in the last two weeks regarding low flying aircraft, aircraft doing aerobatic, and aircraft over-flights has gone up significantly. One of the complaints was about flight activities that occurred two to three months ago.

The rapid degradation of general aviation's image has also been assisted by pilots entering restricted airspace and areas of temporary flight restrictions. While flying back from Albuquerque last weekend, I heard Joshua Approach call out in the blind to an aircraft flying inside a restricted area, telling them to immediately turn to a heading of 270 and leave the restricted area, or otherwise expect to be intercepted by two armed A-10s! We all remember the aircraft that got lost and flew over Washington DC, resulting in the evacuation of the Capitol and White House. Need I say more?

So what can we do to enhance our image and protect our privilege to fly? First, all

pilots need to take aviation seriously. This includes the maintenance of our aircraft, our biennial training requirement, our preflight activities, and following the regulations. Remember the regulations are really out there to protect the pilots, the passengers and the people on the ground. The regulations for aircraft certification and maintenance may appear restrictive, but Part 91 is certainly reasonable and provides pilots with lots of latitude while operating their aircraft.

I think the public generally understands the fact that all machines breakdown and that when an aircraft has a mechanical problem it is going to come down, hopefully to a safe emergency landing. What people don't understand is why a pilot would perform a stupid act that might endanger themselves, their passengers or people on the ground. Accidents resulting from poor pilot decisions are preventable. I believe it is every pilot's obligation to fly responsibly and that failure to do so could significantly impact all pilots' privilege to fly. I also believe that the pilot community should be self policing to a great extent. If you see someone flying in a manner that seems unwarranted, let that pilot know that they are potentially impacting your privilege to fly. Peer pressure goes a long way towards changing an individual's habits and actions.

Stupid Pilot Tricks is a monthly article that attempts to raise awareness of safety and courtesy issues around our airports.

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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