

# The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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## *Time Flies*

Once again we find ourselves starting a new year which allows us to look at our accomplishments over the last 12 months. I have listed the major items completed this last year so our tenants and airport users can get a sense of the kind work that was performed.

- Obtained a certified appraisal of the Springfield Lots and resubmitted the land release request to the FAA
- Continued the noxious weed control program at PML
- Worked with Eagle Scout candidate to construct a permanent display for Air Tanker 76
- Processed encroachments at PML
- Continued to use the Baseline Crew to the greatest extent possible
- Addressed safety issues at both airports noted during Caltrans Division of Aeronautics safety inspections
- Completed the design of the extension to Taxiway Charlie and obtained an FAA AIP grant for the construction. Issued the RFP, selected a contractor and completed the construction.
- Conducted a very successful Father's Day Fly-In
- Assisted with 12 aircraft group fly-ins at Columbia Airport
- Prepared the draft hangar construction RFP and presented it to the Airports Advisory Committee for approval
- Installed security cameras at PML
- Assisted the PMLAA in conducting the PML Airport Day

In addition to the above items, there was a host of other minor issues that are a part of normal airport operation and administration.

All in all it was a busy and successful year for our airports.

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## *Thanks for Your Support*

The Airports Department would like to thank all our tenants and visiting pilots for helping make 2007 a very safe and successful year.

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## *Provide Current Insurance Information Needed*

One of the most neglected items associated with the Reserved Space Permit is the Permittee keeping their insurance paperwork up to date. The Airports Department requires that Tuolumne County be named as a co-insured for aircraft renting space from the County. Most of our tenants keep their paperwork current, but there are always those that change insurance providers and forget to make sure the new policy includes the County in their insurance coverage. Please check your current insurance policy and make sure you have the needed endorsement. Also, if you haven't sent us a copy of your current policy, please do so.

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## *False ELT Signals*

During the last 12 months we have chased down several ELT signals at both airports. Fortunately all of the signals received were due to activation of the beacons for reasons other than an accident.

Generally, we find out about an ELT signal by a phone call from the FAA or the USAF Search and Rescue Center. Obviously, both those organizations and the Airports Department take all ELT signals seriously

and drop whatever we are doing to find the source of the signal.

It is good practice to tune your radio to 121.5 mhz to check for an ELT signal before you shut down your aircraft. This will help assure your ELT did not activate as a result of a hard landing or landing gear shimmy.

Handheld radios can be used to locate an ELT signal by holding the radio horizontal and swinging the antenna in a 360 degree arc. If during the swinging of the antenna the signal gets louder then proceed in that direction. When the signal no longer cuts out while swinging side to side, change the frequency up (or down) a step or two. A strong ELT signal will be picked up on 121.6, 121.7 or higher frequency. Keep stepping up the frequency, swinging the antenna and walking toward the loudest signal. If done properly you will be led to the operating ELT. When the antenna of your handheld is put adjacent to the emitting ELT antenna, a signal should be received on almost any frequency set on the handheld.

If you find an aircraft with an operating ELT, see if the aircraft is unlocked and turn off the ELT. If you cannot access the aircraft, contact the owner or the Airport Administration office. In any case make every effort to get the ELT turned off.

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## *Stupid Pilot Tricks*

### *Gate Crashing*

I'm amazed how a pilot can consistently land a plane at a speed between 50 and 100 knots on a 50' wide piece of pavement in a cross wind, but can't drive a vehicle through a 20' wide airport access gate! You would think that decades of driving experience would provide enough skill to allow a driver to negotiate an automatically opening gate and years of flying would give him the judgment needed to determine when the gate was open. Obviously, this is not the case for some pilots.

Without a doubt, one of the most maintenance intensive aspects of the airports is the vehicle access gates. They are electro

mechanical devices that incorporate card readers, radio receivers and ground loop detectors. Although none of the technology is complex, the gates do get abused from time to time.

The access gates at both Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports serve to keep the general public from driving on the airport operation surfaces (ramp, taxiways and runways). At Columbia the gates also keep the deer out of the airport. Access cards are provided to anyone that has a need to be on the airports.

All the gates are equipped with an electric eye that keeps the gate open when a vehicle breaks the beam. The beam is located right at the gate, between the gate mechanism and post. The gates have a ground loop detector located on the inside of the gate that will open the gate once a vehicle has pulled up close to the gate.

Recently one of the gates at Columbia Airport was damaged by an exiting vehicle. The vehicle either hit the gate while it was still opening or when it was closing since the lower steel frame was bent outward and the center upright frame was bent enough to kink the tubing. Also, the chain link wire was busted loose from the frame. One can only think of the scratch that the gate must have put on the vehicle. Will this stupid pilot tell his insurance company how his vehicle was damaged? I think not. Will he come by the Airport Administration office and offer to pay for the repairs to the fence? I can only hope so!

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*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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