

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Parade-Of-Planes

On Thursday December 17th 47 airplanes and 2 helicopters took to the skies over Tuolumne County in a Parade-of-Planes to celebrate the 100th anniversary of powered flight. We launched a plane every 30 seconds in 3 different speed groups. Everyone had a good time and people on the ground around the county went outdoors to watch the event.

I want to express my thanks to everyone that participated especially Jim Martinelli for leading the parade in the P-51 Mustang. Also, I want to thank Don Elder for his very informative talk on the Wright brothers and Alan Wallace for letting us use his hangar for the event.

Used Oil Disposal

Recently, there have been 4 occurrences where inappropriate fluids have been dropped off at the Columbia "used oil hut". These included solvent, avgas & hydraulic fluid that was mixed in with used oil. If these had been dumped into the 1000-gallon used oil holding tank, we would have had several hundred gallons of contaminated oil requiring disposal. An expensive mistake, to be sure.

I want to make sure everyone at Columbia Airport is aware that our used oil collection facility is limited to crankcase oil & oil filters only. You can dump crankcase oil from your car, boat, motorcycle, lawnmower and so forth, but no other fluids. You cannot dump solvents, cleaners, hydraulic fluids, paint thinners, antifreeze, or other waste fluids. These must be taken to an approved hazardous waste disposal facility.

If you have fluids that you don't know how to get rid of, call Mark Rappaport, Senior Solid Waste Technician with the County's Environmental Management Division at 533-5588 (mrappaport@co.tuolumne.ca.us). Mark can let you know the most cost effective and proper way to get rid of your wastes. The County has grant money that funds hazardous waste collection and disposal. It is everyone's responsibility to manage and dispose of his or her wastes properly, at home and at the airport.

Incidentally, the used oil collected at Columbia Airport is eventually processed in to a bunker-type fuel and is then used to power cargo ships.

Co-Location of Cell Transmitter

In November Cingular Wireless signed a lease with the Airports Department for the use of the Mount Brow off-site beacon tower for mounting new cell phone transmitters and receivers. This is a win-win-win situation.

The first win is that the revenue from the lease goes directly to the Airports Department helping us toward our goal of financial independence.

The second win is that the Cingular equipment is co-located on our beacon tower, below the beacon itself. This means no new tower was constructed in the vicinity of our airport.

The third win is that we will have better cell phone coverage in the area for those that have Cingular as their service provider.

Cingular began construction of the site last month and it should be commissioned sometime in January.

Stupid Pilot Tricks #2

I received several comments regarding my last month's *Stupid Pilot Tricks* article on "prop blasting". It seems there are many people that have watched pilots do stupid things around the airport and all agree that bringing these issues to light is a good thing. Several pilots suggested topics for future articles and one topic raised several times was radio use at the airport. So let's call improper or lack of radio use Stupid Pilot Trick #2.

Our aircraft radios are a tool that can help us safely operate our aircraft. However, that tool is only as effective as the operator. One can have the best radio available, but if it is never used or poorly used it provides no safety benefit. Conversely, if you have a poor quality or inoperative radio, your best efforts to communicate will be fruitless. The ideal combination is a good well-maintained radio operated with good clear radio procedures.

When I was working on my pilot's license my instructor explained that talking on the radio was simple. Just announce 3 things; who you are, where you are, and what you plan to do. For the most part pilots do just that, but there are those out there that don't talk on the radio at all. I am at a loss as to why a pilot wouldn't want to inform other pilots of his or her position and intentions.

Not nearly as serious, but equally troubling are those pilots that announce their position or intentions incorrectly. I have seen planes announce they are right downwind for 17 when they have just about to turn base. It is true they are on the downwind but they should have announced being on downwind when they first got on the downwind leg, not just before turning base. I have also seen pilots announce that they are on final for 17 when they are still on base. Other pilots have a difficult time finding you in the air if you report yourself somewhere different from where you actually are.

Then there are the pilots that announce that they are taking off after they have already started their take-off roll. I was taught that

you announced your departure before you crossed the runway hold line. This gives other pilots, especially those taxiing, advance warning that you "will be" entering the runway for take-off. At Columbia it is difficult to see the departure end of 17 when taxiing across the runway at mid-field. When the grass runway opens this spring there will be numerous aircraft crossing at this location, so please announce your intentions well in advance of your action.

Not to be biased toward our fixed wing pilots, I must say that helicopter pilots are also guilty of tardy radio calls. I have personally been taxiing my Cub for take-off and heard a helicopter announce his departure after he was already airborne and flying directly over the taxiway in front of me. For someone who flies a lightweight big-winged plane, rotor wash is a real concern. Had this pilot announced his intentions before he pulled up on the collective, I could have radioed him and let know I was taxiing in his vicinity, or I could have stopped and waited for him to depart.

The last thing I want to talk about are those pilots that report their position using some point or feature that is not common knowledge. How is the visiting pilot supposed to find you when you report "over Wal-Mart"? The Wal-Mart he shops at is most likely over 100 miles away. Reporting 3 miles southeast is much better and universally recognized.

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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