

The Manager's Approach



Vol. 4 Issue 11

Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

November 2005

PML Access Gate Update

The new gate access card reader at the Pine Mountain Lake Airport has been installed. Tenants and those approved for access should have already submitted a new gate access card request to my office. Even though we made a sincere attempt to inform people of the new system, there have been a few people caught by surprise. If you are not able to access the PML Airport through the access gate, please give the office a call at 209-533-5685 and we will get you set up.

Obtaining an IFR Clearance

The FAA Air Traffic Control has revised the airspace over Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports. Oakland Center can no longer be contacted from the ground on 120.85 to obtain a clearance. Now, you must call either Norcal Tracon or Rancho Marietta FSS via a telephone. This is because Norcal's transmitter is located in Manteca which cannot be reached while on the ground.

For VFR flight following you should contact Norcal Approach on the following frequencies once airborne:

Southbound	120.95
Westbound	123.85
Northbound	127.40
Oakland Cntr	126.85 above 10,000'

Good Neighbor Policy

I have written several times about raising pilot awareness of the impact their flying has on the general public, especially residents near the airports. The biggest

problem is that aircraft emit noise; lots of noise. It comes from the engine exhaust, the propeller and from the air passing around the airframe. Most planes have little to no mufflers because mufflers rob the engine of horsepower and they add weight, two things an airplane doesn't need. Propeller efficiency is related to propeller tip speed which is directly related to noise. The air moving over the airframe actually does not generate that much noise and only by having a quiet engine and propeller, can you really hear the air noise.

Sound travels in a straight line and aircraft have a bird's eye view of a lot of real estate. Consequently, flying aircraft broadcast a very large noise footprint. Most pilots love this sound and generally look upward when they hear a plane fly overhead, but most citizens, especially those that prefer peace and quiet, are often times irritated by a passing plane. Many countries in Europe have implemented strict noise regulations for aircraft, trying to keep peace between pilots and people wanting peace and quiet.

So what can you do to help keep the peace? First, you can operate your aircraft at reduced power settings, especially reduced engine speeds. Second, avoid flying over noise sensitive areas such as Columbia State Park, schools, the New Melones campgrounds and visitor center, the lake at Pine Mountain Lake, and residential subdivisions. Pilots love to fly from point to point in a straight line, but sometimes it may be desirable to put a dogleg in your route to avoid residential areas where people on the ground may not want to hear the scream of your Lycoming or Continental.

PML Master Plan Approval

We are in the final stages of the master planning process for the Pine Mountain Lake Airport. The initial environmental study has been performed and public comments received. Our environmental consultant is preparing responses to the public comments. Soon the master plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for their review and hopefully approval.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

The Pilot That Shouldn't BE

We all have seen or known people we thought shouldn't have a drivers license. Some people just don't exhibit the eye-hand coordination, the ability to anticipate, or the situational awareness that is required to safely operate a motor vehicle. People that cannot handle complex activities should be aware of their inabilities, and avoid putting themselves and friends in dangerous situations. Doing anything else is just plain stupid. Well, I hate to admit it but I'm beginning to believe that there are also people that shouldn't have a pilots license.

The following was observed by a person who has a few thousand hours as a corporate pilot and flight instructor. I have no reason to doubt that any of his observations of this non-local pilot are true and accurate.

First, the non-local pilot was observed taxiing a low wing single engine plane on a narrow private taxiway, when he got too close to the edge of the taxiway and dropped a main gear off the side of the pavement getting the plane stuck. This shows the pilot's lack of attention or skill or both.

After obtaining some help to push the plane back onto the taxiway, the pilot then taxied to a spot short of the runway and began his run-up. The prop blast was pointed directly at a hangar/home, throwing dust and grit against the side of the structure and all over the home's parking ramp. The designated run-up area was on the other side of the runway. This shows the pilot's lack of awareness and consideration.

When this guy got his engine all warmed up and ready to go, he executed a downwind, uphill takeoff. Was he in a real hurry, or was he unaware of the wind direction? I'll bet he didn't even do a quick mental check of his weight against the density altitude, much less consult the POH before making his decision to takeoff downwind.

Finally, after using most of the runway to get airborne he made a climbing right turn to a right downwind (or was it upwind) departure over the Lake at Pine Mountain Lake. Runway 9 has a left hand pattern. He must have missed the right hand traffic note in his airport guide, or miss-read the segmented circle on his arrival the day before.

How many errors did this guy make in his first 15 minutes of operating his plane? Don't forget the first 10 minutes were spent getting the plane unstuck and back on the taxiway! Let's not forget that operating an aircraft requires planning, preparation, practice, education, awareness, and many other skills. We were taught these skills during our flight training. What is sad is that over time stupidity can set in as we forget the things we learned years ago. Sometimes we never learned these skills to begin with. The result is a pilot conducting a flight mostly unaware that he came close to damaging his aircraft, endangered personal property, compromised safety and irritated several people on the ground.

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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