

The Manager's Approach



Vol. 5 Issue 5

Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

May 2006

Safety at the Gas Pumps

It is very unsafe to be smoking a cigarette while fueling any kind of vehicle. We have not only seen people fueling their aircraft while smoking, but have found cigarette butts on the ground around the fuel islands. Anyone that fuels an aircraft knows that explosive vapors come out of the fuel tank as the tanks are filled. The use of any spark producing device or any open flame is a recipe for disaster when fueling an aircraft.

Grounding your plane during the fueling process is an important safety step. Don't shortcut the fueling process just because you are in a hurry. Check your fuel caps for security, too. I cringe when a person brings in a fuel cap that was found on the ramp, taxiway or runway.

Airport Closure for PMLAA Fund Raiser

The Pine Mountain Lake Aviation Association will be hosting a fund raiser for a member of the US Aerobatic Team to help support his participation in the World Aerobatic Championships to be held in Poland this summer. This fund raising event will be held on Saturday, June 3rd at the Pine Mountain Lake Airport from 12 noon until 5 PM. The event will include the closing of the airport from 3 PM until 5 PM for aerobatic demonstrations to be held in an approved aerobatic box located just east of the Pine Mountain Lake Airport. No non-participating aircraft will be allowed to land or take-off during this time. Please make note of this airport closure in the event that you are planning to fly to PML on June 3rd.

Those that do fly over to Pine Mountain Lake to enjoy the event should be aware that there will be limited GA parking. Bring wheel chocks and don't be alarmed if you have to park in the dirt.

I know that this is the most over used phrase in aviation these days, but please "check for NOTAMs before you fly". An airport closure NOTAM will be issued for the Pine Mountain Lake Airport on June 3rd between 3 PM and 5 PM.

Castle/Atwater Frequency Change

One of our nearby airports has changed its CTAF due to frequency congestion. Sound familiar? Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports changed their CTAFs in February 2005. Now Castle/Atwater Airport has changed their CTAF to **123.075 MHz**. The Pilot Controlled Lighting (PCL) will remain on 123.00 MHz [3 clicks on – 7 clicks off]. The frequency change information is also broadcast on their AWOS on 124.475 MHz.

It is my understanding that there is quite a bit of flight training going on at Castle/Atwater these days so be alert when you head that direction.

Father's Day Fly-In Planning

This year's 40th Annual Father's Day Fly-In is really shaping up to be a good one. The warbirds will be out in full force again this year so there should be a lot of activity in the air. We have been having organizational meetings every two weeks and the co-chairmen have been doing a great job at pulling things together.

Now, we need to start getting our volunteers lined up. It takes between 80 and 100 volunteers to safely put on the event. We need help in all areas of the Fly-In and listed below are the various tasks that need to be accomplished:

- Set-up and take-down which involves setting the temporary tower and announcing stand, laying out the ramp areas, setting up the shade tents, placing the Fly-In signage, etc.
- Hospitality support for keeping the volunteers and pilots fed and full of fluids.
- Parking, which is split into three areas; autos, general aviation aircraft and display aircraft.
- People movers which transport the people across the runway and to the parking and campground areas.
- Registration & Information booth to sign in visiting pilots, pass out Fly-In schedules, and answer general questions.
- Admissions where the public is greeted and the entry donation is collected.

All volunteers must fill out a volunteer form which is available at the Columbia Airport office. Also, there is a mandatory volunteers meeting that will be held on Thursday, June 15th at 4:30 PM at the Wallace hangar. At this meeting we will review safety issues, make final volunteer assignments, and distribute the volunteer tee shirts.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like to learn more about what is involved with volunteering for the Fly-In please give my office a call at 533-5685.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Situational awareness and current information are two key aspects of safe flying. I bring this up because it has been 15 months since we changed our CTAF at Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake. Pilots are still arriving talking on our old

frequency. The only reasonable explanation for this is that they have old charts, old airport directories, or old GPS databases. I guess they could have all three together!

It would seem to me that if a pilot was approaching a fairly busy airport like Columbia and the pilot was monitoring a specific frequency but didn't hear ANY calls from the destination airport that MAYBE that pilot has selected the wrong frequency.

I received a report from a local pilot that heard an arriving plane report "entering right traffic for Runway 32" at Columbia. The confused local pilot traded radio conversation with the visiting aircraft indicating that there was no Runway 32 at Columbia but there was a 35 and 17 and that it was a left hand pattern for 35. As the local pilot turned right base for 17 the visiting pilot was encountered making a left base for 17. Where was this visiting pilot's situational awareness? Where was his current airport information? Why didn't he see the segmented circle?

Well, the visitor extended his base leg until he could tear drop back into a right base for Runway 17, landing after our local pilot, avoiding a close call. I hope he was embarrassed enough to get some current information and maybe even a proficiency check ride from a qualified flight instructor.

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:

Tuolumne County Airports Department
Jim Thomas, Airports Director
10723 Airport Road, Columbia, CA 95310
209-533-5685

jthomas@co.tuolumne.ca.us
www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov