

The Manager's Approach



Vol. 4 Issue 10

Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

October 2005

PML Access Gate Update

The procurement of a new gate access card reader at the Pine Mountain Lake Airport that is compatible with the PML Association's proximity gate cards is running a little behind schedule. We had hoped to have the new system operating in September. All the wiring has been completed and the software has been received, but the hardware has not been installed. When completed, a sign on the card reader will inform those seeking access onto the airport to use their Pine Mountain Lake Association gate card and not the old airport access card.

New PML Airport Gate Card Applications were mailed out to all current gate card holders. Several people returned their applications indicating their old airport access card number. What is needed is the PML Association proximity gate card number. If you have not yet submitted your new gate card application form, you need to do so soon and make sure you provide the correct card number so you will have uninterrupted access to the airport.

New Reserved Space Permit

The Airports Committee approved a Department procedure that gives hangar tenants until December 31, 2005 to have their name on the registration of the aircraft in the hangar. This is one step toward the elimination of the subleasing provision in our effort to get the hangar waiting list moving. The Airports Committee received a couple of comments voicing a concern that some aircraft in the hangars are owned by corporations and that individual names cannot be shown on the aircraft registration.

In cases such as these the tenant must provide documentation that shows the tenant is somehow officially tied to the corporation. Keep in mind that the purpose of the new requirement is to encourage people that no longer own airplanes to give up their hangar, allowing the next person on the hangar waiting list to get his or her plane out of the weather.

WAAS Coming to Our Airports But Not Soon

WAAS stands for Wide Area Augmentation System, a system that provides extremely accurate horizontal and vertical guidance for instrument approaches based on the GPS. This system will allow precision approaches into airports without requiring the installation of additional ground based equipment. I requested the needed WAAS survey for both Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports, however, the FAA's WAAS implementation plan establishes airport priority based on the type and frequency of airport operations. Those airports with scheduled airline or commuter service have priority and busier airports have priority over those less busy. For this reason, it will be several years before our airports receive the WAAS survey which provides the needed data required to prepare the approach procedure.

Mariposa Airport Identifier Changed

Remember when the Pine Mountain Lake Airport identifier change last year. Well now Mariposa has changed its identifier. Their new identifier is MPI. Unfortunately,

the September Sectional Chart still indicates the old identifier, O68. It will be six more months before the new identifier is depicted on the chart. For those of you that keep your GPS database current, make sure you use MPI (KMPI) when navigating to the Mariposa Airport.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Keeping An Eye Out for Traffic

I had just touched down on Runway 27 at Pine Mountain Lake and was rolling out a little over half way down the runway when a car pulled up to the end of the runway and then crossed right in front of me! My speed was probably about 20 miles per hour and the end of the runway where the car crossed was at least a 1,000' ahead. Was it a dangerous situation? No. But it could have been had I been going faster, had to execute a go around, made a long landing, lost my brakes, or had another type of problem.

The people driving around our airports are mostly pilots. Why would a pilot driving a car want to do something as stupid as interfering with an aircraft operation? My best guess is that the drivers are "looking" for, but not "seeing" the aircraft. Let's admit it, if an object is not within several hundred feet of our car we don't view it as a threat, so maybe our eyes are trained to only focus on objects within a short distance from us.

Now let's get down to the basics. Cars really shouldn't be crossing the runway. But at both Columbia Airport and Pine Mountain Lake Airport, there is only one alternative to getting to the other side of the airport and that is to drive completely around the outside of the airport. I realize that this is not the most expedient way to get to your destination on the opposite side of the airport. Recognizing our tendency to always be in a hurry, and the need for safety, I have included the construction of vehicle access roads in the development plans for both airports. Until we construct these roads, we are stuck with people driving across the runways.

At Pine Mountain Lake the only acceptable location to drive a car across the runway is at the extreme west end of the airport and only after looking both directions for aircraft in the air and on the runway. If none are seen near or on the runway, then you can quickly, but cautiously cross.

Columbia Airport has three locations where vehicles cross Runway 17-35. Crossing at two of these locations, at the windsock and at the threshold of Runway 11 is highly discouraged. The reason we don't want people crossing at the windsock is that you cannot see the threshold of Runway 17 because of the hump in the runway. The hump makes it nearly impossible to see an airplane that just started to roll or just touched down. Crossing at the intersection of Runway 11 and 17-35 is even more dangerous because you cannot see the threshold of 17 and you have to look for traffic on final for 11. The safest and the only acceptable crossing point at Columbia Airport is the threshold of Runway 35.

Crossing the grass runway is not allowed because cars and trucks have a much higher wheel loading than aircraft which damages the grass. You don't drive your car across your lawn at home, so please don't drive across our grass runway.

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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