

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Taxiway Charlie Project

The final project close-out meeting with Teichert Construction was held last week to wrap up the final paperwork. The taxiway extension project looks good and we are waiting for the hydroseeding to take hold before we open the taxiway for use. At the moment the soil at the edge of the taxiway is pretty muddy.

Overall, the project went very well and Teichert performed all their work without requiring us to shut down the grass runway for safety reasons. I'm sure that most of the pilots that use the grass runway appreciated Teichert's crews staying out of the Object Free Area (OFA).

The taxiway extension project also included the relocation of an eight inch diameter Tuolumne Utilities District waterline. The original waterline was located under the ground where we want to construct new aircraft storage hangars, thus the need to relocate the waterline.

Columbia Airport to Operate Campground Pavilion

The Tuolumne County Aeronautical Association (TCAA) built their clubhouse in the Columbia Airport campground in the early 1980s. Along with the clubhouse they also build the bathrooms and the picnic tables. TCAA has hosted many aviation gatherings, held their monthly meetings and hosted the Father's Day Fly-In dinners and pancake breakfasts at the clubhouse. Over the years their clubhouse has been a real asset to the airport especially to the campground. TCAA's contribution to the

airport and to aviation in Tuolumne County cannot be overstated.

Now with the membership in TCAA declining and their interest in hosting aviation group fly-ins falling TCAA has chosen not to renew their lease with the airport. The increasing cost for liability insurance was also a contributing factor. TCAA's decision to give up their clubhouse has been a difficult one which was made after many months of discussion amongst their membership.

Because their clubhouse is such an asset to Columbia Airport and because I strongly feel that attracting aviation group fly-ins to Columbia Airport is good for general aviation, I am going to make sure the clubhouse is still made available for aviation related activities. Scheduling the use of the clubhouse will now be the responsibility of Airports Department. We will charge a modest daily or weekend use fee and a cleaning deposit to cover the cost of operating the building.

When TCAA hosted events at their clubhouse they often provided meals when requested by the visiting group. Since TCAA will no longer provide meals, the kitchen facility will be made available for use by those renting the building. A list of local caterers will be provided to fly-in groups so they can arrange for their own meal service.

The Tuolumne County aviation community should recognize TCAA's contribution to Columbia Airport over the years. One of the reasons the airport has become a destination for many pilots is because of the campground and its amenities, all of which were built by TCAA.

Trees Removed from Runway Approaches at Both Airports

Over the past several months we have had the Baseline Crew remove trees that had grown into the approach paths of our runways. These trees were identified by the Caltrans Division of Aeronautics Safety Inspector during his visits to our airports. The regulations require us to keep trees from growing into the established 20:1 approach slope for all our runways. We also had to trim trees and brush growing in the approaches to both the CAL FIRE and Air Med helipads. Many of us hate to see trees cut down, but we must make sure that aircraft using our runways have object free approaches. On top of that, keeping the approach path clear is a requirement of our airport operating permits.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Not Closing Your Flight Plan

As pilots know there is a lot to do to safely execute a cross country flight. The FAA requires that the pilot familiarize himself with the weather along the route of flight and at the destination. There are other aspects of flight planning too, especially if it is a long cross country. From a safety perspective it is wise to either file a flight plan or pick up flight following from air traffic control. An alternative to filing a flight plan is to have a close friend or relative have details of your flight. This could be the person that will be meeting you at your destination.

A flight plan serves the purpose of implementing a search for you in the event that your flight does not end as planned. Initiating a search for a missing plane quickly can speed your rescue in the event that you have to make an off airport landing.

There are three steps to a flight plan; filing your flight plan with the flight service station, opening the flight plan once you are airborne, and closing the flight plan once at your destination. Each flight plan includes an estimated time in route and when that

time expires the FAA begins their search. The first stage of the search is for the FAA to call someone at the destination airport to see if the aircraft has arrived. If the aircraft is observed on the ground it is obvious the pilot forgot to close his flight plan. The FAA's call to the destination airport is usually made to the airport office. In Columbia or Pine Mountain Lake Airport's case, my office receives the call. Since a missing aircraft is serious business, we immediately go look for the plane in question. If the arriving plane has been parked in a hangar and we can't tie the N-number to a tenant, then we notify the FAA that to the best of our knowledge the aircraft is not on the ground at our airport. This prompts the FAA to continue their search for the missing aircraft.

So please, don't make the stupid mistake of not closing your flight plan. We have several signs around the airport to remind pilots that they need to take care of this critical third step.



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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