

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Draft FAA Compliance Guidance Letter

The FAA has come out with a draft of a Compliance Guidance Letter that will provide guidance to FAA Airport Regional and District offices regarding an airport sponsor's Federal obligations as it relates to an airport residential development, through-the-fence operation, and on-airport residential access to federally obligated airports. At issue is the FAA's belief that through-the-fence operations and residential airparks are not compatible with the grant conditions attached to FAA Airport Improvement grants, thus making airport owners unable to comply with the grant conditions.

A through-the-fence operation is a business or operation that is located off the airport property but has access to the airport which is necessary for its business. Generally, the FAA's stand is that off airport businesses may have a financial advantage over airport based businesses, thus reducing the opportunity for the airport to be financially self supporting.

The draft Compliance Guidance Letter also states that "there are no acceptable forms of residential through-the-fence agreements. This position is not new to Tuolumne County because the FAA has, in writing, expressed their stand that the Pine Mountain Lake Airport is not eligible for FAA Airport Improvement Grants because of the adjacent airpark.

Many of the items addressed in the draft Compliance Guidance Letter are already addressed in the FAA Airport Compliance Manual, Order 5190.6B which can be accessed on the internet.

So what does this letter mean to Tuolumne County and to pilots in general? From my

perspective, if the letter is not substantially changed, it just confirms that Pine Mountain Lake Airport will not receive any FAA grant money to upgrade or improve the airport. Columbia Airport should be unaffected since there are no through-the-fence operations at the airport. From a general aviation and pilot's standpoint, it means that some smaller airports will not be eligible to receive FAA Airport Improvement grants. Airport improvements must be funded by the airport owner or other method. Some of the airport improvements that will suffer may be AWOS installation or upgrades, runway and ramp rehabilitation, airport lighting rehabilitation or upgrades, airport marking rehabilitation, and grading & drainage improvements.

Anyone wishing to read the letter can obtain a copy of it at:

http://www.eaa.org/news/2009/TTF_Guidance.pdf

Anyone wishing to comment on the letter can do so by submitting your comments before December 21st to:

Mr. Charles Erhard
Federal Aviation Administration
ACO-100
800 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20591

County Furloughs

The County has chosen to furlough its employees as a part of the overall effort to reduce costs. The Airports Department will participate in the County program to close offices for the Thanksgiving week and for two weeks between December 21st and January 1st. By closing offices there will be savings in heating and lighting the office. However, it is important to the safe operation of our airports to have someone either working or on-call during the office closure. To assure this, at least one of the

Airports Department maintenance staff will be working throughout the furlough period. Our two maintenance staff will be taking their furlough days at times other than the designated County furlough days.

Airport Weather Cams

Our winter weather is becoming an issue again making it important that pilots check the weather before departing on a flight. Checking the weather at your departure point, enroute, and at your destination is a FAA requirement. Thanks to the effort of our local EAA Chapter 1337 with assistance from Aero Resources and the Airports Department, Columbia Airport has four weather cams that provide pilots a visual picture of the weather around the airport. The camera images can be viewed at the following website:

http://www.eaa1337.org/columbia_airport_cam.htm

There are also links on the County Airports Department and Aero Resources web pages.

Unfortunately, the cameras go down from time to time, so be sure you check the date and time at the bottom of the images to assure what you are looking at is a current weather picture.

At Pine Mountain Lake Airport a single weather camera image is available through the Wallace Company. This camera only looks to the southwest but does provide a good picture of the weather to the west of the airport. This camera can be viewed at:

<http://www.wallacecompany.com/E45/index.html>

Again, make sure you check the date and time to be sure the images are current.

Last, the Columbia Airport AWOS is available by calling 536-9384 or at:

<http://awos.co.tuolumne.ca.us/>

PML Hangar Construction

Excavation for the foundation of the new hangars at the Pine Mountain Lake Airport has begun. The Airports Department wants to thank all the aircraft owners that relocated their aircraft to facilitate the construction effort. A NOTAM has been issued that

alerts pilots to the construction activity and the need to avoid the construction area.

Noise Sensitive Areas

As a reminder to our local pilots, we have several noise sensitive areas near our airports. Maps showing these areas are posted at both airports. Please be neighborly and avoid these areas.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Buzz Job but Not What You Think

I now know that there are two kinds of buzz jobs; one where the pilot purposely flies his plane low over a building, vehicle, event or person; and one where a vehicle or person purposely crosses the end of a runway while an aircraft is landing.

Flying your aircraft low over people, residences or events is against the FARs, unless you are landing or taking off. Pilots should never intentionally buzz anyone but sometime it occurs when a pilot is on short final for a runway and a person or vehicle crosses the end of the runway. For this reason a pilot must use proper judgment and decide whether he can safely land over the top of the person or vehicle or whether a go-around is necessary.

In the case of a person or vehicle crossing a runway while an airplane is landing this is clearly a situation where the person on the ground did not verify that the approach was clear before crossing the runway. Unfortunately, many of the ground bound offenders are pilots who should know that they need to check for landing aircraft before crossing any active runway.

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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