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Flying During Snow Removal Operations

Note: The following article was prepared prior to the December 20th blizzard, and the storms that followed. An additional article is included at the end of this newsletter providing details on the most recent storms.

The Greeley-Weld County Airport on average experiences about 5 snow events during the winter months which require snow removal. Airport staff typically will begin monitoring each of these events prior to their beginning, and provide field condition reports and Notams as soon as there is any notable accumulation or other pavement contamination to report. Information is provided in accordance with the reporting requirements contained in the Federal Aviation Administrations guidelines for airport winter operations and Notam handbook. Breaking action reports are provided using a Vericom computerized decelerometer, which is FAA approved for providing MU (friction) values.

For the second winter now, the Airport Authority is using a method during the conduct of snow removal operations which is intended to increase the operational safety of employees who are operating snow removal equipment on the airports runways. It is also intended to decrease the likelihood of an unfortunate incident in which an aircraft may land or take off from a runway while snow removal equipment is present on the runway. Prior to beginning any snow removal operations, Notams are issued which formally close both of the airport's runways, except with a 15 minute PPR (Prior Permission Required).

So... what are you, the pilot, supposed to do if you need to fly during, or immediately after a snow event?

Most snow storms we experience at GXY are overnight events. This means that the airport staff will have been out during the night to issue Notams with field conditions and breaking action reports. However, at 7 A.M. the following morning, that information may already be 8-10 hours old, and the conditions may have changed. It is currently the Authority's practice to re-check conditions and update Notams before 8 A.M. Snow removal operations however will not typically begin until 8 A.M., unless the airport staff has prior knowledge of an aircraft which requires a departure earlier than 9 A.M. *It is the responsibility of the pilot to contact airport staff the day prior, or as early as possible thereafter, if he/she expects to land or takeoff during a snow event, or during snow removal operations.*

To notify the Airport Authority of your intent to land or take off in accordance with the 15 minute PPR, first call the Peak Flight Support desk at 336-3010. In the event there is no answer, attempt contact on Unicom 122.8 MHz. In the event there is no answer on Unicom, you can utilize the Unicom frequency to contact snow removal equipment working on the airfield. Do not taxi out and take off or land without establishing voice contact first. Simply announcing your intentions over Unicom does not mean that snow removal equipment operators heard you, nor does it mean that they will be off the runway. Also, the sooner you contact us with your departure time, the more likely it is that we will be able to plow a path out from your hangar to the runway. Lastly, as always, Pilots should never drive their vehicles onto the runways to check the conditions before they fly. However, airport staff can usually accommodate such a request, if contacted early enough before your departure time. Also remember that Notams are sent out via our email broadcast list, and can give you the most up to date conditions before they are published through the Denver AFSS.

These procedures are in place to improve the safety of airport operations for both pilots, and those of us working on the ground. Please call us at 336-3000 with any questions. Please remember, the earlier we are contacted, the better service we can provide to you.

Aircraft Registration Survey

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has recently notified airport operators across the U.S. of a requirement to provide aircraft registration information on all based aircraft as part of a verification program which affects airport funding. Within the next month or two, the Airport Authority expects to transmit survey slips to all based airport tenants, asking for the current registration number (N number) of the aircraft which the owner keeps on the Greeley-Weld County Airport. The N number is the only information tenants will be asked to provide. Once collected, a list of N numbers, which represents all of the based aircraft at the Greeley-Weld County Airport, is required to be supplied to the FAA.

The information is being collected by the FAA strictly for airport funding eligibility purposes. It is this information which in the future will help dictate the eligibility of the Greeley-Weld County Airport to receive federal funds for airfield improvement and maintenance projects. Without the information, the airport stands to lose the ability to obtain these funds in the future. The FAA, and National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO), have both assured us that this is the only purpose for which the information will be used.

For the purposes of the survey, every aircraft which is based on the airport and has a current registration N number assigned to it, should be reported. This includes aircraft that may be in various states of new assembly or re-construction, or even non-airworthy aircraft, provided they have a current registration number. Additionally, aircraft that are only based on the airport part-time during the year should also be reported, even though they may also be counted at another airport. Aircraft that are based in Greeley, but registered to an address elsewhere, should also be included.

We ask each tenant to understand that the Airport Authority is mandated to provide this information to the FAA. We will first attempt to collect this information through the survey slips, and then personally call anyone who has not returned a survey slip for the information. If we are unable to make contact, airport staff will then check each of the hangars for which tenants have not returned this information, to verify the registration number for ourselves. Please call the Airport Authority administrative offices during normal business hours if you desire to receive any additional information about this program.

Auto Parking Dilemma

Where to park your car in a T-hangar area while you are out flying has always been a dilemma at many airports through the years. Many airports prohibit the parking of automobiles inside of T-hangars, while some prohibit parking them outside of the T-hangars. The Greeley-Weld County Airport Authority allows both.

A few years ago the Airport Authority began painting parking spaces on certain ends of many of the T-hangar buildings. This was done because some cars were being parked in manners which did not allow for other cars to be parked in the same area, or, they were being parked to far away from the buildings, causing problems for taxiing aircraft. This has greatly improved the ability to park multiple cars on the end of the buildings, and has minimized the obstructions for taxiing aircraft. Additionally, the Airport Authority has always

encouraged tenants to park their cars inside of their T-hangars, since this obviously results in the least problems in terms of available parking spaces around the T-hangar area. Keep in mind that while your car may be parked inside the T-hangar unit, that your own insurance is still what covers any damage to it.

Parking spaces on the south end of T-hangar building 48 have recently been a bit of problem however. Several larger turbo-prop aircraft operate from the large corporate hangar in the southwest corner of the area, immediately south of T-hangars 48 and 50. Automobiles parked on the south side of T-hangar 48 have caused some concerns over wingtip clearance as these turbo-props have taxied by them. In some instances, wingtips have passed over the tops of these autos in order to taxi in or out of that hangar's ramp area. Tenants are asked to try and avoid parking on the south end of T-hangar 48 unless absolutely necessary. If you must park there, please be sure you are as close to the building as is practicable.

You may have noticed...

...that the chain link fence between the picnic shelter, just west of the terminal building, was recently relocated approximately 10 feet farther back from the aircraft parking apron. The placement of the fence in this area when it was installed in 2004 was carefully considered, to allow for the appropriate amount of wingtip and tail clearance by aircraft, while also still allowing for adequate space for airport mowers to get around the picnic shelter. While the original location of the fence met all of the FAA's criteria for placement, pilots taxiing right up to the edge of the apron in an effort to avoid having to push their aircraft back into the tie-down spaces resulted in an unusual number of wingtip strikes against the fence, resulting mostly in very minor damage to the aircraft. This goes to show that sometimes even the best thought out plans require revision. Despite the proper placement of the fence in this area, the Airport Authority decided to move the fence farther back before some real damage occurred.

2006 Project Report

What projects? It seems like nothing new happened this year! No major construction activity took place on the Greeley-Weld County Airport in 2006. So what did we do all year besides the normal upkeep and maintenance of the airport?

It was still a busy year for the airport staff. In March, 2006, the Airport Board adopted some new administrative goals. For a year with no contractors, these projects kept the airport staff pretty busy. Some of the results of these goals include the following:

1. Establishment and initiation of an Airport Public Relations Plan.
2. Establishment and initiation of an Airport Public Information Plan.
3. Establishment and initiation of an Airport Economic Development Plan.
4. Establishment of a Landscape Master Plan for the airport.
5. The overhaul and expansion of the airport's web site.
6. Substantial progress towards an oil and gas well development program to diversify the airport's revenue sources.
7. Re-formation of the Airport Security Advisory Committee (ASAC) which is reviewing security plans and procedures to identify improvements that may be made at GXY.

A number of other special airport maintenance projects were carried out as well, including the conversion of previously landscaped area around the terminal building to xeriscape, and major repairs to some airport equipment.

If you would like additional information on any of these projects, please call the airport administrative offices during normal business hours at (970) 336-3000.

So what about 2007 projects?

Now that we all remember what it is like to actually have two runways available for an entire year, it's time to get back to business.

Two projects are scheduled for 2007. A fog seal is planned to take place on the airfield during the summer of 2007. This will require the closure of all runways and taxiways in a carefully orchestrated manner to ensure that there is always at least one runway open, since both are scheduled for this work. The seal coat which will be applied to all runways and taxiways is designed to add longevity to the long term performance of the asphalt, by protecting it from moisture penetration and harmful UV rays. The runways will both have to be re-stripped after the seal coat has cured. This project, while disruptive to operations, should not require any extended closure of airfield areas, and should be completed in a few short weeks once it begins. It is likely that the Authority will take advantage of the contract price and utilize other maintenance funds to seal coat pavement in hangar areas, and or the vehicular roadways on the airport as well.

The second project is improvements to the storm water detention facilities on the airport. You may recall that this project is required in large part to satisfy the agreement with the City of Greeley, as a condition of avoiding costly storm water utility fees. Phase I will take place in 2007, which will include design, and some construction, most likely utility relocations. The majority of construction however is scheduled to take place during the summer of 2008. During this second phase, it is intended that the existing detention pond will be substantially enlarged and placed back into service. The project will also include secondary containment controls, so that the detention pond can be used to temporarily contain a large scale fuel spill if one ever occurs on the airport, before it reaches and contaminates the river.

Glenn Vaad retires from Airport Board

Weld County Commissioner Glenn Vaad retired from the Greeley-Weld County Airport Authority Board of Commissioners after seven years of service to the Airport Authority. Commissioner Vaad was appointed to the Airport Board in January, 2000, and served as the Chairman of the Board in 2002 and 2003. During his tenure, many improvements occurred to both the airport and the manner in which the Airport Authority conducts business. Commissioner Vaad's input and leadership during his service will be evident on the airport for many years to come.

Although Commissioner Vaad has reached his term limit as a Weld County Commissioner, and, subsequently as an Airport Commissioner, he will continue to serve the interests of area citizens, as he was recently elected to the Colorado House of Representatives to represent House District 48. On behalf of the Board and staff of the Greeley-Weld County Airport Authority, we bid him a fond farewell, and look forward to him representing the interests of the area at the state level.

Board Welcomes New Commissioner

Newly elected Weld County Commissioner Bill Garcia has been appointed to replace outgoing Commissioner Glenn Vaad on the Greeley-Weld County Airport Authority Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Garcia will attend his first Airport Board of Commissioners meeting on Thursday, January 18th. Commissioner Garcia has a background in law, which is expected to further benefit the diverse nature of experience available through members of the Airport Board.

Did you know... that the Greeley-Weld County Airport Authority can accept your monthly rental payment by credit card? More and more tenants have begun taking advantage of this service, as it eliminates the need to write a check and mail it to us each month. We can even set up an automatic transaction so that it charges automatically without you having to call it into us. For more information, or to set this service up, call Mandy Oliva at (970) 336-3003, or email her at MOliva@gxy.net.

Hangar Maintenance Needs

Over the winter months, airport staff will be conducting maintenance inspections on all T-hangars. A standardized checklist will be used to determine any maintenance needs in each of the Authority owned T-hangar units. Tenants will be receiving notice via email and through monthly statements with the inspection schedule for each building. Tenants are encouraged to contact Kevin Freiberg directly, at (970) 336-3002, or at kfreiberg@gxy.net, to report any maintenance deficiency which they are already aware of in their hangar, or, if you desire to be present when the inspection is performed, to schedule that time.

Please remember that each tenant's T-hangar lease provides for access by the Airport Authority, and that the tenant will only use the lock provided by the Authority, unless other arrangements have been made. If airport staff members are unable to access a T-hangar unit because of a changed lock, the lock will be removed if we are unable to contact the tenant for access.

The information gathered during these inspections will be used to create a database of hangar maintenance needs, which will assist the Authority in prioritizing and addressing the maintenance requirements of each individual T-hangar unit.

FBO Welcomes Avfuel Brand

Peak Flight Support is now beginning the process of changing fuel brands from Phillips 66 to Avfuel. The decision came after much consideration by Ken and Susan Harris, owners of Peak Flight Support. After several years of providing Phillips products, the decision to make the switch is one which is intended to bring improved service, equipment, and programs to Peak Flight Support's customers.

In addition to the direct benefits to customers, programs offered by Avfuel will allow Peak Flight Support to replace its aging mobile fuel trucks with newer vehicles. Avfuel will also offer Peak the opportunity to take advantage of dealer programs intended to help the company increase its sales volumes to transient aircraft customers. By making this switch, Peak Flight Support intends to become a stronger company, resulting in better service and programs for its existing customer base. The transition should be complete during the first quarter of 2007.

The round of storms... which has repeatedly battered the region over the past few weeks has certainly made things interesting around the airport. Numerous large piles of snow surround many hangars and portions of the airfield, with little place for more snow to be pushed as it comes. Through the three storms which started on December 20th, and took us through New Years, airport staff worked well over 150 overtime hours, in addition to their regular hours, to keep the airport operational. We dealt with several equipment breakdowns during the events, but in all but one case, the equipment was quickly repaired and back out pushing snow. One truck remains out of service due to substantial transmission problems. After the initial blizzard, the Greeley-Weld County Airport was the first airport in the region which was affected by this storm to re-open. This had direct benefits for the FBO, as aircraft unable to land at other airports in the region were diverted to Greeley instead.

These storms also caused the airport crews to substantially modify the manner in which they normally conduct snow removal. Runway 16/34, while the first runway to re-open in the region, was not plowed out to its full width, as there was simply no way to keep pushing snow up and over the edge lights and guidance signs. While the airport normally plows out hangar areas and ramps on private leaseholds the same day of a snow event, these had to wait, as there was no use making hangars accessible if the airfield was not accessible. Eventually, while some tenants undertook their own snow removal on their leaseholds, the airport crews did get all hangars, ramps, and parking lots plowed out. Throughout these events we substantially increased the amount of communication with tenants about what was happening through the email transmittal of Snow Advisory Notices, which has never been done before. This kept many well informed as to the status of the airport, and limited the number of phone calls tenants had to make to staff to otherwise find out what was going on.

We received many compliments from tenants on how well we dealt with the storm, both in person, in emails, and in written letters. We even had several tenants offer to, or make, cash contributions to help offset the substantial costs the airport has incurred in keeping their businesses open through these events. However, we also received some criticisms. Many of the same questions were posed over and over, even by those who may have praised the airport for its response to these events. To help everyone better understand why the airport did things the way it did, or the way it will in the future, we offer answers to these common questions below:

1. Why can't the airport get more (and larger) snow removal equipment to deal with these big storms?

As it stands now, the airport actually owns more snow removal equipment than we have operators for. Certain portions of the airport are more efficiently dealt with by certain types of equipment, and, in many areas, smaller, more maneuverable equipment is more efficient to use than larger high capacity equipment. Given a normal snow event, the number and type of equipment the airport already has is actually very efficient in returning the airport to normal operations. Having additional, or larger equipment, will not necessarily improve snow removal operations under normal conditions. Given the recent storms however, it certainly would have helped. However, there is a cost associated with buying, maintaining, and insuring additional equipment. The obvious question is whether it is a sound financial decision to invest tens, or hundreds of thousands of dollars, in snow removal equipment which would sit mostly idle, and only be used once every 7-10 years when a storm such as this hits. The airport has the ability to purchase surplus equipment from CDOT and DIA, and we look each year at what equipment is available, and whether it would improve our snow removal operations. We will continue to look at what equipment is available this year, and purchase equipment if it makes sense to, and if it is within our budgetary abilities.

2. Why can't the airport just make a quick pass in front of my T-hangar and then go back to other snow removal?

Sometimes we can, many times it does not make sense. We recognize that everyone just wants the snow in front of their hangar cleared out quickly. However, in this last round of storms, if we responded to every request we had such as this, it would have kept us pretty busy, and taken away from the greater goal of clearing the whole airport. It is seldom as simple as one quick pass. While that may get the snow out from directly in front of a door, all of the snow

around that hangar needs to be cleared in order for it to be accessible. Additionally, there is a method to how, where, and what direction snow is pushed throughout the hangar areas. There are only a few locations that snow can be stockpiled out of the way. Spending time clearing in front of a hangar often is counter-productive, as all of the snow from other hangars nearby must be pushed past that hangar, before it makes sense to direct attention to that particular hangar.

3. Why did the airport leave so much snow piled in front of my hangar door this time?

Most tenants know that we don't normally do this. A typical snow event is only several inches, and airport snow removal equipment can get within 6-10 inches of the hangars, leaving an insignificant amount of snow in front of the hangar door. However, in these past events, snow had drifted to several feet deep against most hangar doors. The snow was wet, and heavy, making it difficult to push, even with our largest loader. In one instance, one of our dump trucks trying to get close to the hangars actually struck the hangar, when the weight of the snow actually pushed the truck off track and into the hangar.

4. Why didn't the airport staff split into separate crews and operate in two 12 hour shifts, 24 hours per day?

We simply do not have enough manpower for this. The entire snow removal crew consists of five people. The Airport Authority employs a total of six people. Splitting into crews of 2 and 3 would have caused the work to take much longer than it already did, since most of our equipment and people work in conjunction with each other to effectively remove snow from many areas. It is an orchestrated effort in many areas, and removing any one piece of that effort greatly reduces the efficiency at which we can work. As it was, the loss of one dump truck in the first storm due to transmission problems caused notable delays in clearing the runways and taxiways during the second and third storms.

5. Why didn't the airport hire a contractor to remove snow?

In the recent history of GXY, this was never required. The airport staff has always responded to and adequately dealt with all snow removal issues. Most contractors in the area were already tied up working for the City, or other entities. Additionally, having a contractor working on site would have taken away from the airport crews efforts, as constant supervision would have been required. This is certainly an option that we will be considering for future events however, to determine how effective, and what the fiscal impacts would be.

There were a number of other more minor questions, but these seemed to be the most relevant. We appreciate the numerous positive comments that we have received over the past several weeks, and thank you for them. For those that we were unable to satisfy however, we hope that there is at least the understanding of how significant these storms were for us, and the overwhelming effort that each member of our staff put in to keeping the Greeley-Weld County Airport operational, and available for your use. Each employee of the Airport Authority will continue to put forth the same level of effort in upcoming storms.

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We want this newsletter to be of value and interest to our tenants and users. If you have an issue or idea you would like us to report on, email it to us at moliva@gxy.net. Also, if you would like to share your news with others, email that to us and we'll put it in the next issue of The GXY FLYER.
