



The Leader In Recreational Aviation

Chapter 736 Newsletter for August 2017

Fly-In 2017

This year's is but a memory. The weather was iffy but held off and allowed us to fly 84 Young Eagles. Every eligible child got his or her ride.

We again thank all the pilots and helpers for their assistance.

Free social flight planning app debuts in U.S.

[Airmate](#) (ctrl-click to open hyperlink), the free social flight planning app, was launched in the U.S. at EAA AirVenture 2017.

Used by tens of thousands of pilots in Europe, Airmate is now available in the United States and Canada.

Features of the latest 1.17 version include:

- Moving map with worldwide aviation database updated free of charge
- Free airport approach plates in US, Europe and more than 100 countries
- Detailed weather briefing
- ADS-B traffic receiver support with traffic displayed on the map
- Support for geo-referenced charts (US charts are planned to be geo-referenced soon)

“These days, in the U.S. and most developed countries, aviation data is freely available from aviation authorities,” said Daniel Mavrakis, CEO of Myriel Aviation. “This enables us to provide access to that data free of charge to pilots. Using Airmate, pilots are also able to share information with each other. Our app is free, because its development is funded by advertising from service suppliers: FBO, handlers, repair stations, restaurants.”

FAA Is Taking Advice It Earlier Rejected

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration is implementing recommendations it rejected six years ago that could have prevented pilots from nearly landing last month on a taxiway crowded with jetliners awaiting takeoff in San Francisco.

The National Transportation Safety Board in 2011 recommended a software upgrade to ground radar systems that would warn when a plane is landing in the wrong place. But the FAA dismissed the recommendation, declining to even study whether it was feasible, according to government records.

In an announcement issued since the San Francisco near-collision, the FAA says it has begun over the past year doing what the safety board recommended and testing could begin in a few months.

"We believe recent technological advances may now enable us to modify our ground surveillance systems to detect aircraft that are lined up to land on taxiways," the agency said Friday in an emailed statement.

Air Canada Flight 759 was approaching the San Francisco International Airport just before midnight on July 7. Instead of heading for the runway, pilots lined up about 500 feet to the right, aiming for a parallel stretch of pavement where four planes were preparing for takeoff, according to the NTSB. The tails of the first two planes on the ground were about 56 feet high, just three feet below the landing plane's lowest altitude, according to the safety board.

"Where's this guy going?" a pilot in a United Airlines plane that was at the head of the line said in a radio call to the airport tower. The air-traffic controller didn't warn the Air Canada pilots until after the cockpit crew had already aborted the landing.

The potential risks of such a collision have been highlighted by several similar instances in the past, including when actor Harrison Ford landed a small plane on a taxiway in February at John Wayne Airport in California.

The NTSB examined the issue in 2009 after a Delta Air Lines Inc. plane touched down on a taxiway in Atlanta. No one was hurt because there were no other aircraft on the taxiway at the time. The safety board concluded the crew's abilities were degraded by fatigue after an all-night flight.

As part of that investigation, the NTSB found that an existing radar system at major airports could be adapted to warn controllers if a landing plane was headed to a taxiway instead of a runway. This was critical, according to NTSB, because controllers stationed in airport towers often can't tell whether an arriving plane is properly lined up for a runway.

Investigators contacted what is now Saab Sensis Corp., a division of Sweden-based Saab AB, to see if its system that tracks planes on the ground would help. Officials at Sensis concluded the technology, known as ASDE-X, could be programmed to detect a potential errant landing as far as 0.75 miles from the airport at Atlanta, according to a March 2, 2011, recommendation letter by NTSB.

"Such a warning would afford air traffic controllers the opportunity to assess the situation and provide instructions to a flight crew that would prevent a taxiway landing or potential collision with aircraft or vehicles that may be on the taxiway," NTSB wrote.

The safety board, which investigates accidents but has no regulatory authority, called on FAA to conduct a broader feasibility study and to upgrade the warning system where possible.

Randolph Babbitt, the FAA's administrator at the time, responded later that year that the ASDE-X system wasn't up to the task, according to NTSB records of correspondence in the case. ASDE-X's primary job is to warn controllers when there's a risk of a plane colliding with another aircraft or vehicle on a runway. Adding a taxiway warning would degrade the system's primary mission of preventing runway collisions, Babbitt wrote.

"Simply concluding that the performance tradeoffs would outweigh the safety benefits of providing the recommended capabilities without performing the review ... does not constitute an acceptable response to these recommendations," the NTSB wrote in response.

As part of its formal system of tracking recommendations, the NTSB classified it as "closed -- unacceptable action."

A more recent taxiway landing, this one involving an Alaska Air plane in Seattle in 2015, helped prompt the agency to refocus on trying to develop a technological solution, according to the FAA. No other planes were on the taxiway and there were no injuries.

The upgrade was also made possible by recent software improvements in how the ASDE-X system tracked arrivals, the agency said.

"The FAA since last year has been working to modify the systems so they will also capture aircraft that are lined up for taxiways," the agency said in an emailed statement. "The agency expects to begin testing some modified systems in a few months."

INHOFE CREDITS GA PILOTS FOR DELAYING ATC PRIVATIZATION MOVEMENT

Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe credits general aviation pilots for slowing the momentum of air traffic control privatization in the U.S. House of Representatives—but he said more must be done to prevent a shift that could jeopardize the freedom to fly.

"It's not over yet," Inhofe said July 29 during a forum at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. "It's because of you that we've had the success we've had so far."

The House is backing an FAA reauthorization bill that includes ATC privatization. The Senate has approved a separate bill that doesn't.

The Senate version also contains Inhofe-backed measures that better allow pilots to defend themselves from FAA enforcement actions; allow GA airports to upgrade infrastructure; protect funding for contract control towers; and streamline the FAA aircraft certification process to encourage technical innovation.

Inhofe, 82, is a veteran pilot and flight instructor with more than 11,000 flight hours, and he's flown all over the world.

"Our (air traffic control) system is better than anyone else's," he said. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

AOPA President Mark Baker and Experimental Aircraft Association President Jack Pelton praised Inhofe at the forum as GA's most effective advocate in Congress. Inhofe was the author of the Pilot's Bill of Rights, which ushered in third class medical reform, and he's seeking to clarify and expand those laws in the current FAA reauthorization bill.

"You'll benefit from third class medical reform because it's now a reality," Inhofe said.

Inhofe was the subject of an FAA enforcement action in 2011, and he said that experience taught him a lot about how the system treated pilots unfairly.

"If the FAA accuses you of something . . . you don't have a choice, and the NTSB often acts as a rubber stamp," he said. "We wanted to open up the process."

Inhofe is an aerobatic pilot, and when political opponents suggested he was too old to serve another six-year term, Inhofe recorded a TV ad that showed him flying (and rolling) his two-seat Van's Aircraft RV-8.

"When I'm too old to fly an airplane upside down," he said, "I'll be too old for the United States Senate."

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, August 24 at 6:00 pm** at Curtis Air, Pittsfield Municipal Airport.