Whether you fly or not

It's your airport

and here's what it does for you.

AOPA

Your community airport may be public property or privately owned with public access. It may host commuter airline service or only the aircraft of local companies and individuals. It may be home base for a dozen airplanes or a hundred or more.

Whatever the specifics, the airport is an important community asset. How does it serve your community? Here are some of its benefits.

Economic progress

Your airport is an integral part of your community's economic engine. Besides the jobs and income it provides directly, the airport is instrumental in the creation of community income by business and industry that use general aviation (i.e., non-airline) transportation to facilitate their operations. Most corporations would never locate a plant, headquarters, or distribution center in a community without a nearby airport.

In addition to direct spending by airport users, businesses and local industry, the 'multiplier effect' of airport economic benefits spread throughout the community. In study after study, airports' positive economic impacts far

outweigh any local public funding an airport may receive.

Because virtually all airports, large and small, are important elements of the national air transportation system, special taxes on the flying public fund grants-in-aid for construction and maintenance of runways and other infrastructure. This brings more money into the community, making the airport one of the best civic bargains available.

Worldwide connections

Your local airport is the community's link to the national and international air transportation network.

When the nearest major hub airport is an hour's drive away or more, your

community airport can save you valuable time with on-call charter or air taxi service.

The great advantage, especially for the business traveler, is the ability to fly on *your own* schedule, not the airline's. You fly when you want to fly.

Your time savings translate into more business, more freedom to get things done, and more time with the family at home. When community businesses exploit these advantages, it's reflected in community economic health.

Emergency services

Airports' most evident — often dramatic — social benefit is emergency medical, law enforcement, and disaster relief services. Medical specialists speak of the 'Golden Hour' following serious injury, when treatment is most likely to save a life. Medevac airplanes or helicopters, usually based and/or serviced at the local airport, are the vital link in airlifting the injured from accidents or flying the sick to specialized treatment in distant cities.

Less well known are the thousands of 'angel flights' flown by volunteer private pilots. Patients too ill to travel by land are often helped by pilots who volunteer their time and their personal or business-owned aircraft. Often, an airport firm also provides fuel and supplies for the trip.

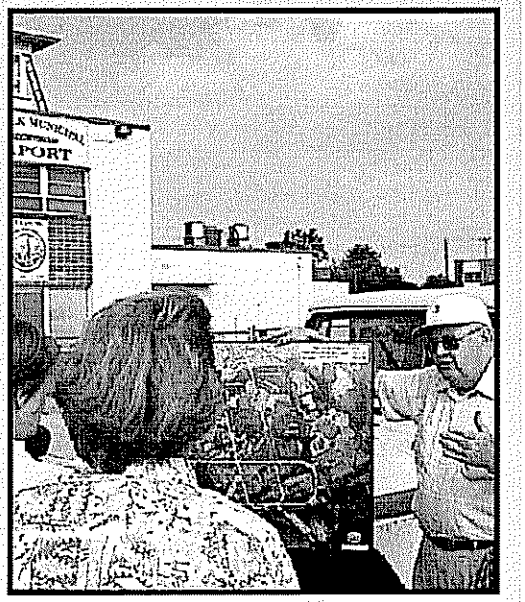
Airborne law enforcement agencies provide rapid response to emergency situations from your airport. Included are airborne traffic control, search-and-rescue, tracking or pursuit of suspects, and emergency evacuation.

Local airports are most appreciated during community emergencies such as floods, earthquakes or major fires. In Florida recently, hundreds of aircraft were called in from as far away as Canada to help control the worst brush fires in Florida history. Many lives and much property were saved.

When the National Guard or federal assistance is mobilized, your local airport — no matter its size — is the pathway and staging point for outside disaster relief.

Looking at all sides

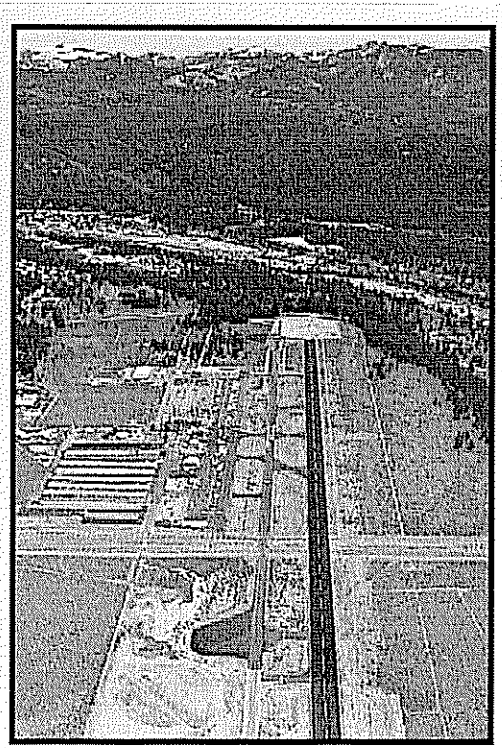
Most people have little direct contact with their local airport. As a result, their first concerns may be about safety or noise.



And why is aircraft noise perceived as

more intrusive? Psychologists say it's largely because each noise event is usually isolated — a single plane passes overhead, is heard for a minute or so, then fades into the distance. It's noticeable. Your neighbor's lawnmower or local freeway traffic goes on for 20 minutes, an hour, or more; but it 's background noise and you get used to it.

Furthermore, other 'next-door' noise is from a familiar source. You *know* lawnmowers and freeway driving. Most of us get close to an airplane only when boarding an airline flight.



Dedicated to safety

For some, a subconscious fear accentuates the perception of aircraft noise. But in fact, aviation's safety record today is excellent. Even in non-scheduled general aviation, there are fewer than 350 fatal accidents a year in the course of 40 *million* flights annually.

The odds against injury to persons on the ground are astronomical. The chances of being killed or seriously injured in a building on the ground are about one in 30 million, or about 50 times less likely than being killed by a shark!

Enforcement of sensible land use and

zoning laws would avoid virtually all noise and safety issues. Unfortunately, too many eager developers have been allowed to build housing projects in areas where residential construction should have been barred.

In many cases, home buyers are not advised of the airport's proximity until they are irrevocably committed to the purchase. Their complaints are then directed to the airport. But more states are passing 'full disclosure' laws requiring realtors to inform buyers if the property is near an airport.

Unfortunately, some realtors still fail to comply with the law.

Living in harmony

AOPA strongly advocates airport policies and pilot conduct conducive to harmony with the community.

We urge airport managers and local pilot associations to consult frequently with local government and citizen groups on planned airport activities and future development. As integral, functioning elements of community life and the local economy, airports must play a responsible role as partners with their communities.

AOPA and many local aiports conduct 'Fly Friendly' noise-abatement programs, including the design and promotion of flight patterns that avoid residential and other noise-sensitive areas.

General aviation desires harmonious relations with communties that support vigorous, productive airports. After all, we, too, are members of the community.

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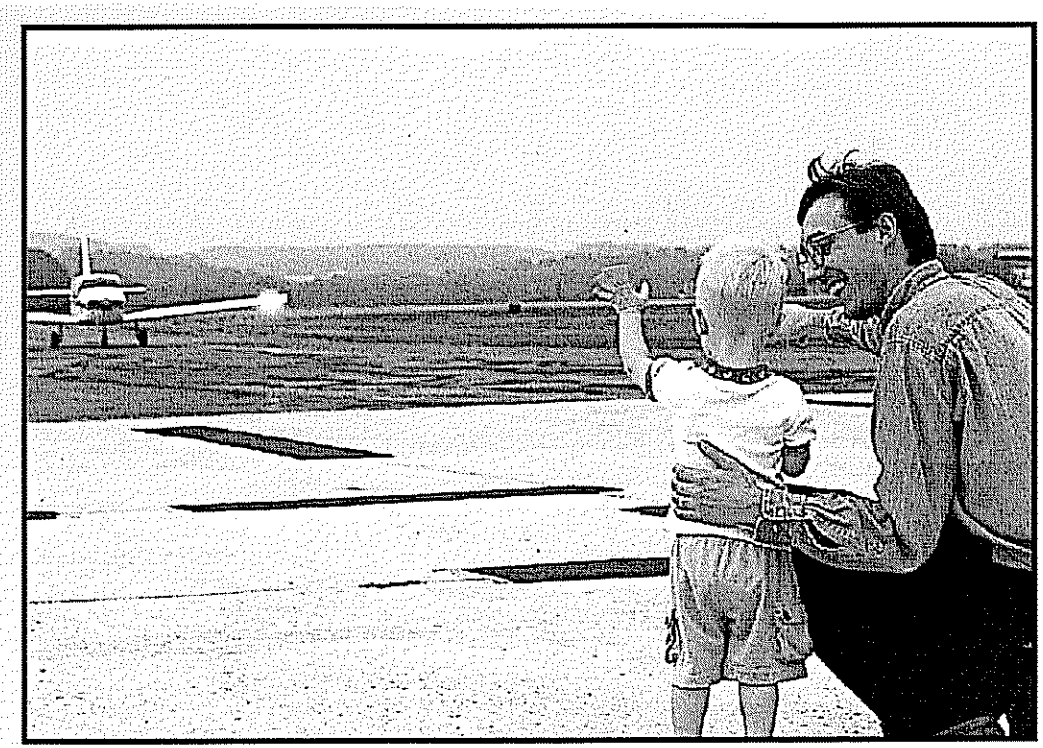
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