



Airport News

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How Hard Would It Be to Find You?

Do you give much thought to your Emergency Locator Transmitter? “Off-field landing” has a soft, fluffy, textbook-like sound to it. The reality may not be nearly so smooth or gentle. At this writing there is still no word on exactly what happened to a missing Boeing 777 airliner with 239 people on board. This particular model was over 209 ft. long, almost 61 ft. tall at the tail, had a wingspan of almost 200 ft. and likely weighed around 500,000 pounds when it disappeared March 8th. The particulars of every possible means of communications have been thoroughly dissected to try and figure out where this aircraft ended up. The case-file remains open.

The world of search and rescue of general aviation aircraft has been changing rapidly over the past several years. The ‘yelping’ sound on 121.5 MHz signaling that an ELT has been triggered somewhere has been morphing into a digital signal on 406 MHz that not only signals that an ELT has been triggered, but also includes who owns the ELT, a tail number and can include the GPS coordinates of where it is located. Satellites that once ‘listened’ for the 121.5 signal, now only monitor 406. With the 121.5 MHz system, searchers had to literally go out and find the ELT by zeroing in on that radio signal through triangulation – a somewhat tricky process that is/was not an exact science. With the 406 MHz system and GPS, rescue crews can fly or drive directly to the coordinates and dramatically shorten the time-to-find for downed aircraft. New 406 MHz ELTs do still broadcast the 121.5 MHz yelp to facilitate pinpointing their location, if GPS coordinates are not available. The much quicker “find” can mean the difference between life and death if there are serious injuries involved.

Other kinds of Personal Locator Beacons are also available and offer different feature sets for use in certain situations. The 406 MHz ELT, though, is the very strongly recommended first choice for GA use in that it provides hands-off activation in the event of a crash and puts rescue crews into action quickly using GPS location information.

Pricing for 406 MHz ELTs is becoming more competitive every day and the very high prices that were seen when 406 was first introduced are long gone. Having a 406 MHz ELT with GPS capability could be the best investment you ever make in survival gear for your aircraft.

ELT Day

As I was writing the piece on ELTs I got a call from the Division of Aeronautics saying that they had a satellite report from the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center that a 406 MHz ELT was active somewhere between Nampa and Caldwell, but there was no GPS info. They asked me if I would check it out. I tuned my office radio to 121.5 MHz and there was that old, familiar wail! I then used my truck radio and a hand-held radio to find the specific hangar and aircraft. An owner was installing a new 406 MHz ELT and something had gone haywire in the test process! Re-starting the ELT got him back on track. Recommended takeaway: During 406 MHz ELT install, tune a radio to 121.5 MHz to minimize the chance of surprises.

Right-of-Way Inside the Fence

The runway, taxiways, transient ramp, tie-down areas, taxi lanes and the various short connectors that are inside the fence of our airport are all the primary domain of aircraft of one sort or another. The ground vehicles that we drive around inside the fence are 'guests' in this land of aviation. If you drive here, please keep that fact firmly in mind and try to THINK before you drive through an obviously muddy area that then tracks the mud and gravel onto the taxi lanes. Please tread gently so that the shared facilities remain in top-notch condition for everyone's use.

Business Owners: Please remember that your employees should be parking outside the fence and remind your vendors that delivery vehicles should not be inside the fence unless a specific delivery requires it. All package/tool delivery vehicles should operate outside the fence.

Gopher Update

Most of the gopher population appears to have survived the winter. You may have noticed that we have added a new weapon in our attempt to maintain control of the unpaved ground at the field. One of the big, green tractors has been outfitted with a plow-like device that directly places poison pellets underground where the gophers can easily find and consume them. We continue to detonate tunnels with the Rodenator using the red pickup. Hopefully, the combination of the two will prove effective.

Available to Rent?

Please contact Kathy at the office if you would like to be on our referral list of hangars available to rent.

(See the March Airport News for details.)

Calling All Hangar Owners

Do you know what's going on in your hangar(s)? At least one of our hangar owners was surprised recently to find that their tenant was not using the facility for aeronautical purposes. Everyone who owns a hangar needs to confirm that they are using it in accordance with their lease agreement. That means that the primary use must be for an operational or near-operational aircraft that requires access to the runway and/or taxiway system. Other incidental uses are okay, provided that the primary use is aeronautical. Incidental uses might include things like storage of: spare vehicle; motorcycle(s); boat(s); personal watercraft; personal belongings; trailer; tools; or a pilot's lounge.

Hangars may not be used for other purposes like: substitute for mini-storage; sheet metal fabrication; warehouse; off-field business dispatch; or temporary residence, to name a few examples. Any of these uses are violations of the lease agreement and are grounds for termination under the default provisions. Owners, please be sure that your hangar is being used appropriately and not leaving you open to possible adverse legal action.