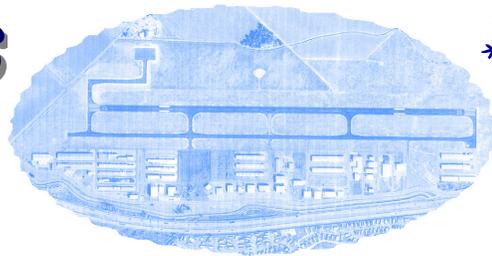


Airport News

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Beacon Light Swap

The following is from the current edition of the "Caldwell Perspective" newspaper.

There was a changing of the guard, of sorts, at our airport late in December and it harkens back to the roots of aviation and nighttime flight. Most flying, like most driving, takes place during the daytime when the pilot or driver can see most clearly. Nighttime flying involves many more challenges than nighttime driving.

In the early days of flight, people with vision for the future spent time thinking about how this new-fangled contraption called an airplane could make people's lives better. At that time the danger and difficulty of nighttime flying put some severe limits on those brainstorming sessions.

One of those ideas, however, was to fly certain letters all the way from coast-to-coast rather than the then current practice of transferring the mailbags to railroad trains at night. But that meant flying at night and lots of it.

Long before radio navigation or GPS became standard, pilots used compass headings and a technique called dead reckoning using landmarks to get from one place to another. As pilots found that they could fly at night from one town to the next using bright lights for reference, a new long-distance flying idea formed. Beacon lights could be constructed every few miles along a certain route and pilots could then follow the lights at night. The nighttime flying plan cut days off the coast-to-coast mail delivery timeline and dramatically helped draw the country closer together through improved communications.

Caldwell's airport has had for many, many years a 53 foot tower that is a veteran of what came to be called the "Transcontinental Lighted Airway System." It was created in the late 1920s and early 1930s allowing pilots to fly those "airmail" deliveries through the night. The routes eventually were expanded into Idaho, but the primary nighttime airmail run initially was between Chicago and Cheyenne. We understand that our particular tower was once located somewhere between Boise and Mountain Home. *(continued on page two)*



Beacon Swap (cont.)

When the Transcontinental Lighted Airway System was shut down, this tower was moved to its new home in Caldwell.

Late in December, after multiple motor re-builds and much tender loving care (TLC) over the years, we replaced the original beacon light assembly with a much smaller, more modern unit. With a very welcome lift from the Priest Electric Company of Caldwell, the trade from one beacon to the next went very smoothly.

At night Caldwell's rotating beacon can be seen from miles away in the air and can also be seen from many locations on the ground around the west end of the Treasure Valley with its distinctive alternating flash of white and green light that identifies it as a public-use airport.

With a little more TLC from city staff, we hope to eventually be able to place the old beacon on display at the airport in the Hubler Terminal so that visitors can see and learn a little bit about this piece of our flying heritage.



Safety Notes:

Is it worth risking your life to save a few seconds by driving across the "Red Zone" intersection where Taxiway F feeds into the Transient Ramp? That area remains off-limits to ground vehicles that do not have the Airport Manager's explicit permission.

Tell a friend. The life you save may be your own.

AWOS Update

Many of you are painfully aware that our AWOS (Automated Weather Observing System) was offline for part of November and much of December. It is again operational, but not by much. The AWOS provides: wind speed and gusts; wind direction; temperature and dew point; altimeter setting; density altitude; visibility and variable visibility; sky condition; cloud height (layers and ceiling) and liquid precipitation accumulation.

Much of the equipment that combines to offer those varied "readings" is getting quite old. The system is owned and maintained by the FAA using staff from Boise. This past year our site was visited as part of a nationwide survey of older sites. Based on that survey the Caldwell location is on a list to be upgraded to new equipment the Fall of 2015.

Given the rash of problems that we've experienced recently, I have written a letter to the person responsible for managing the AWOS upgrade program and asked that we be upgraded sooner, if possible. Our request is being considered; I'll let you know when I hear more AWOS news.