

AIR TAP Briefings

A publication of the Airport Technical Assistance Program of the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota

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Coming soon: A guide to agricultural spraying for airport managers

In response to a lively discussion on agricultural spraying at the 2008 AirTAP Fall Forum, AirTAP and several partners have worked together to update a guidebook on agricultural spraying, putting the focus this time on the airport manager's role in the process.

The idea for the revised *Agricultural Aircraft Operations on Municipal Airports: A Guidebook for Municipal Airport Managers*, published in June, was sparked by the numerous questions directed to speaker Eric Klindt, an active member of both the National and Minnesota Agricultural Aviation Association (MAAA). Several Minnesota Council of Airports (MCOA) board members suggested that AirTAP, MCOA, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the MAAA work together to develop a guidebook for airport managers that includes recommended practices and current information about agricultural spraying issues. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the FAA offered input as well.

Every municipal airport in Minnesota will receive a copy of the guidebook in the mail, and an electronic version will be posted on the AirTAP Web site. To request additional print copies, contact Mindy Carlson at 612-625-1813 or Carlson@umn.edu.

Several current issues are requiring airport managers to take a closer look at agricultural aircraft operations and to evaluate the benefits and liabilities. These issues include the additional requirements for storm water treatment and collection, greater prevalence of transient operations, and increased attention to both legal and environmental factors.

The guidebook was developed to

address those concerns. It summarizes the laws, record-keeping requirements, operational issues, space requirements, material storage, insurance, and emergency response plans related to agricultural spraying and provides a list of additional resources. Some highlights from the publication follow.

Legal considerations

Federal, state, and local rules and regulations help airport managers keep operations safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible. Since all aircraft are entitled to use public airports, airport owners must ensure these rules provide a good balance between limiting liability and aiding efficiency for aircraft operators. In addition to the rules and regulations that cover general aviation, agricultural aviation is subject to regulations dealing primarily with the dispersal of fertilizers and pesticides through the aviation network. The guidebook covers these regulations as well as record-keeping requirements for the agricultural aviation operator and the airport manager.

Pesticide mixing and loading areas

Before deciding where to locate pesticide mixing and loading areas, the airport manager should consider human and environmental safety issues such as proximity to wells and other water supplies, storm sewer and tile inlet locations, surface water, prevailing winds, and traffic patterns.

A load pad is an environmental protection device placed under an aircraft to protect the ground surface from becoming contaminated if a chemical leak or spill during mixing or loading occurs. Minnesota has specific guidelines stating



when a load pad is required. Although load pads are effective environmental protection devices and their use is encouraged, in many cases best management practices can accomplish similar environmental protection for less money.

If the airport owner is considering installation of a permanent mixing and loading area, an environmental assessment may be necessary to determine baseline information, site suitability, and compliance with other state regulations. In some instances, a permit may be required for permanent load pads.

The use of one load pad by multiple operators carries significant risk. The final decision on whether to share a load pad should be left to the load pad's owner or lessor.

Pesticide storage

Pesticide storage requirements are explained by Minnesota laws and rules. Among those are that pesticides must be

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Fall forum will feature airport "Year in the Life"

Please join us in Mankato for the 2009 AirTAP Fall Forum on Monday, September 28, and Tuesday, September 29. The theme of this year's event is "A Year in the Life of an Airport," with sessions covering the maintenance, operations, and administration activities an airport should focus on each season.

The annual event brings together airport personnel from across Minnesota to network and learn about current topics related to aviation and airport operations. New to the forum this year are "jet blast sessions" — 10-minute targeted learning on different topics throughout the two days.

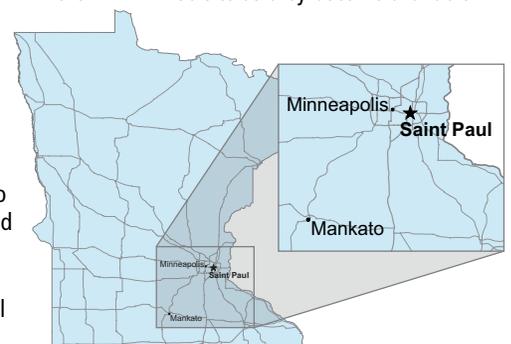
Forum participants will also have the

opportunity to view and give feedback on Mn/DOT's new Capital Improvement Program (CIP) software, which will change the way airport staff enter CIP data in the future. Another session will focus on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements (especially as they relate to testing) and cost-effective solutions for airports.

Jeff Hamiel, executive director for the Metropolitan Airports Commission, will return to the forum, drawing on his extensive aviation and leadership experience to address issues important to airport operators.

The forum brochure and registration form will

be mailed the end of July (online registration will also be offered). Event details will be posted on the AirTAP Web site as they become available.



stored only in their original containers that bear a current pesticide product label, and storage areas must be secured against access by unauthorized persons and wildlife. A person may not allow a pesticide, rinsate, or unrinsed pesticide container to be stored or kept, or to remain in or on any site, without adequate safeguards.

An airport manager may also wish to adopt additional best management practices for pesticide storage, such as specifying that storage activities take place in designated areas only and that emergency response and clean-up materials must be kept in pesticide storage areas.

Emergency response

Even well-managed aerial application businesses are subject to an accidental pesticide release. Each airport should develop a specific emergency response plan tailored to its facility, clearly designating the steps to take in an emergency. The response plan should also address the location of and the entity responsible for providing emergency response equipment.

Facilities that store or handle pesticides are required by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) to develop an emergency response plan. The airport manager should check that each aerial application business operating at his or her facility has individually completed such a plan and is familiar with the airport's plan as well. In most instances, state law requires the responsible party or an owner of real property to report a spill to the commissioner of agriculture immediately upon discovery.

Insurance

In 1989, the Minnesota legislature recognized that environmental liability insurance was becoming increasingly difficult for pesticide applicators to purchase. In response, the legislature created the Agricultural Chemical Response and Reimbursement Account (ACRRA). ACCRA uses funds from a surcharge on pesticide licenses and agricultural chemical sales to provide low-cost insurance for pesticide applicators and others who

might need to access the fund as a result of a chemical release or spill.

In 2002, the legislature amended the ACRRA statutes in response to concerns by Minnesota airports that they might not be considered eligible should they need to access the ACRRA funds. Therefore, the definition of who was eligible was expanded to include the owners of municipal airports in Minnesota where a licensed aerial pesticide applicator has caused an incident through storage, handling, or distribution operations for agricultural chemicals, provided certain conditions were met.

Summary

Because agricultural aircraft operations are a viable activity routinely conducted at Minnesota's airports, airport owners and operators must develop sustainable practices to ensure operations are safe and environmentally responsible. In addition to this guidebook, the AirTAP Web site will provide information on new resources available from a variety of public agencies on this topic.

"Shop talk" event offers inside look at snow and ice operations

There wasn't a flake in sight on this sunny May day, but in Minnesota, snow is never that far off. With equipment parked, it was a good time for airport staff to talk about snow and ice removal and plan ahead for the coming winter.

About 25 management and maintenance staff from Minnesota and Wisconsin general aviation airports attended AirTAP's "Shop Talk" workshop held at the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) maintenance facility on May 14. Participants were able to see and tour the considerable space and equipment that the MAC owns and operates as well as network with each other and MAC staff.

Paul Sichko, MAC assistant director of Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) operations, began by expressing his willingness to help smaller airports with information about equipment purchases. He also noted that MSP is willing to loan safety equipment, such as yellow construction "Xs" and friction testing devices, to airports if needed. He then turned the program over to his staff, who provided a comprehensive overview of how they maintain MSP.

Sichko noted that the keys to the maintenance

program at MSP can be attributed to two things:

- A dedicated staff who work only at the airport (unlike some airports who have to share staff with public works or road maintenance departments); and
- A developed plan for maintenance, which is routinely reviewed with their clients and customers. As Sichko noted, "We plan the work, and work the plan."

Other topics covered in the Shop Talk workshop included mowing equipment and strategies, winter turf re-establishment, turf maintenance

and the use of fertilizers and herbicides, rodent and other wildlife control, environmental considerations, and training.

AirTAP extends a special thanks to the MSP MAC staff for hosting the event and looks forward to a similar session next spring at St. Paul Downtown Airport.

Editor's note: Paul Sichko also presented at the 2008 AirTAP Fall Forum. His presentation, "Snow and Ice Control at Minneapolis-St. Paul Int'l Airport," is available for download at www.airtap.umn.edu/Events/FallForum/2008/Presentations/.



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