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Watsonville Emergency Airlift Command Team, (W.E.A.C.T.) Scott Williams-News letter editor

Verizon 3G 5:23 PM 98%
Menu KWVI Watsonville Municipal Maps
● VFR 29m ago
KWVI 042353Z AUTO 24005KT 10SM CLR
37/02 A2990 RMK AO2 SLP123 T03670017
10372 20294 56017
Time 4:53 PM PDT
Winds 240° at 5 kts
Visibility 10 sm
Clouds Sky Clear
Temperature 37°C (98°F)
Dew Point 2°C (35°F)
Pressure 29.90 in Hg
Info Near METAR TAF Winds FBOs

I must first apologize for the delay in publishing this issue. The reason being that I wanted to dedicate this issue to the W.E.A.C.T. exercise, and that event wasn't scheduled to take place until October 4th. Due to family commitments, I arrived late and most airplanes had already departed on their sorties. Once I got to the exercise Tom Hail assigned me to Marjorie, who was engrossed in managing flight operations. It was an unusually warm day in Watsonville as you can see from the METAR report on the left- notice the temperature and time of the METAR. Who would of thought density altitude would be a factor in Watsonville, in October none-the-less, especially if the aircraft were actually transporting loads near max gross weight. Marjorie estimated approximately 35-40 people participated in

the exercise. Participants included airport staff, ham radio operators, and volunteer pilots who generously donated their time and airplanes to fly sorties entailing packaged drop offs and pickups as far north as San Carlos Airport. Other missions included a couple of planes flying reconnaissance missions over the levies. Even Council member Lowell Hurst stopped by to observe the exercise, and expressed appreciation for the pilots' dedication in preparing to help the community in times of need.

The W.E.A.C.T is modeled after South County Airport's emergency action plan, and Marjorie emphasized that it's still in the developmental stages. Dan Chauvet contributed two articles related to this event by touching on the history of the Loma Prieta earthquake, and comparing that event to Katrina and the impact the local pilot community can have when disaster strikes a region.

If you missed KION's news report on the event, I've included the link below, as well as the City's link pertaining to this exercise.

<http://cityofwatsonville.org/city-of-watsonville/32070>

<http://www.kionrightnow.com/news/local-news/watsonville-airport-drill/28413190>

They Flew Over Closed Roads

Dan Chauvet, corporate pilot- retired (Watsonville)

An experienced air traffic controller looked at his radarscope and realized he had never seen so many airplanes traveling to and from one airport. That airport was Watsonville (WVI). It was right after the Loma Prieta Earthquake, 6.9 on the Richter Scale. Those airplanes were loaded with relief supplies, medical supplies and equipment, and people coming to provide aid. Why the airport? It was almost the only way into Santa Cruz County, and it was safe and fast.

Yes, the 25th anniversary of "the big one" hit on October 17, 1989. Highway 17 was closed with slides, as was hwy.129 through Chittenden Pass, and hwy.152 over Hecker Pass. Fallen bridges between Riverside Drive and Airport Blvd closed Highway 1. During the earthquake, a highway patrolman "flew" his patrol car off the end of a broken bridge and landed on his wheels on part of the bridge below. Whoa! That must have been thrilling. Highway 1 going up the coast from Santa Cruz towards Half Moon Bay also had problems. The one and only road open was San Juan from highway 101 to Watsonville, and traffic throughout the region crawled bumper-to-bumper.

In an emergency, airports need to have some kind of direction. The incoming stream of airplanes with supplies needs to be directed to unloading areas. "Where do I unload these supplies?" Sharon Reeder who worked at Watsonville Airport took charge, made quick decisions and organized an unorganized situation. Asked about it, she said, "I was just doing my job." Oh yeah, where in her job description does it include, "handling an airport in an emergency with unusually high traffic?" There were aircraft of all sizes, from two-place Cessna 150s to military 4-engine C-130s and big Navy helicopters. And who controls trucks driving on airport operational areas gathering supplies for delivery? Complicating the situation was no electric power, no normal radio equipment, no runway lights, and no power for pumping fuel.

Sharon enlisted the help of Sandy Bella, Theresa Levandoski-Byers, Louise Minniear and others. Watsonville Fire Chief Gary Smith had his hands full with damaged buildings and fires. Helicopters had to be restricted from flying downtown near damaged buildings, for fear vibration from the rotary wings would cause further damage. After shocks in the high 5s kept people ducking for cover. It's not like these people at the airport didn't have problems of their own, i.e., is my family safe and how bad is my house trashed? Everybody had their own problems. But Reeder set the bar high, very high, 25 years ago -- for airport operational managing in emergencies.

The history of airports associated with earthquakes is that runways remain undamaged, and therefore usable. Now 25 years later there are scripts for emergencies. At WVI there is now a backup generator to supply power for aircraft fuel pumps, runway lights and other facilities. There are drills for testing emergency action plans, which includes amassing relief aircraft to help. Is the airport ready for the next one? Well, now there's a plan, and the airport is better prepared.

See the video below produced by Arlo Reeves some years ago, and recently linked to U-Tube by Brian Moffett:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lSpT0p4XY_A&feature=youtu.be

25 Years Ago and The Next One

Dan Chauvet, corporate pilot- retired (Watsonville)

My previous column was about Watsonville Airport's role during the Loma Prieta Earthquake. The airport provided fast and safe access/egress to the county when highways were closed. Flown in were an estimated 500,000 pounds of relief supplies. The reason why the airport was able to function so well in that emergency was thinking people. They had a positive attitude, common sense, and a can-do approach about doing a job in unexpected adverse conditions. New management procedures had to be invented. Action-minded pilots, like Bill Dickerson, from Reid Hillview Airport, assembled mobilizations of aerial relief airplanes quickly. And on the receiving end at Watsonville Airport, was Sharon Reeder, "just doing my job", in emergency conditions.

In stark contrast, look at New Orleans after the Katrina Hurricane. In a hurricane you have a forecasted track and time-line; with earthquakes, there's no forecast (not yet). Mayor Ray Nagan showed his leadership abilities by bugging-out to Texas. The plan: keep *glutonus maximus* in one piece. In advance of the storm many (like Ray) evacuated. But many didn't have transportation. In New Orleans, hundreds of school buses sat idle, not being utilized- "Can't use those, they're school buses". So they ended up sitting in deep water. After the storm passed much of the town was isolated for days and days and days. Available resources like sections of freeways sat empty. Airplanes can (and have) landed on freeway sections. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) mobilized airplanes that could have airlifted supplies, like drinking water and medicines. And they could have flown sick people to where they could be cared for. Can't do that! Why not? New Orleans was a restricted area, a disaster area. You can't fly into a disaster area (even for disaster relief?). It was a can't-do mentality. The only bright spot was the Coast Guard using helicopters to pick people up off rooftops. In retrospect, what New Orleans needed was leadership. People who would plan and practice in advance. That promotes flexible can-do thinking.

Now 25 years later, Airport Manager Rayvon Williams, Tom Hail, Marjorie Bachman and Peter Plink are leading and organizing. They are making sure that in the next earthquake (or other emergency) the airport is even better prepared to fill its role in providing critical transportation and relief. That will mitigate severe problems for the population. They've organized what's called the Watsonville Emergency Airlift Command Team (WEACT). It sets up a database of who is going to be called to action, and how they are going to respond. This promotes a can-do attitude, some management ideas, and procedures that make best use of the resources that are available. It's like professional pilot's required cockpit resource management (CRM) training, only on the ground. It's a what if, and a can-do plan, in advance. On Saturday October 4 the WEACT put on its first drill. It included meeting, thinking, planning, and then transporting cargo to and from Watsonville Airport. In the next drill relief agencies like the Red Cross plan to participate. South County Airport also has an emergency airlift team and conducts drills.

Where and when will the next earthquake strike? How severe will it be and what will be the damage? We just don't know. It looks like the lessons learned from the last one have not been forgotten. That's good.

Tarweed & Taxiway

By Dan Chauvet,

On August 13, 2014 the dedication of the rebuilt taxiway C at Watsonville Municipal Airport was heralded by a ribbon cutting ceremony. Don French, previous Airport Manager, did the ribbon cutting. In his short speech he related the inordinate obstacles and hurdles that needed to be surmounted. The rebuilt and repaved taxiway is located west of the north south runway and goes to and from the approach end of runway 9. The finished project culminated 10 years of frustrating delays and red tape caused by the California Fish and Game Department and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The problem: is the airport an airport, or is it strictly a habitat for growing the Santa Cruz Tar plant (*Holocarpha macradenia*)?

The US Fish and Wildlife Service considers the plant "threatened"; while the California Department of Fish and Game considers it "endangered". It's a plant that some regard as a worthless noxious weed. Tarweed is unpalatable to farm animals and wildlife. Up in eastern Oregon a different species of tarweed is sprayed with weed-killer to allow other plants to compete for soil nutrients and water. The Santa Cruz species' range is Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties. It's a primary succession species (first to establish) and relies on disturbances to exist, such as scrapping the soil, cutting competing grasses, or heavy grazing. There are extensive acreages of the plant here; one of the biggest is east of Amesti Road and the south side of Pioneer Road. And guess where else it occurs, on Watsonville Airport where the grass is mowed to reduce fire danger and produce hay. The California Department of Fish and Game insisted on preserving every tarweed plant.

Before the fix-the-deteriorated-taxiway-project could proceed and be funded, surveys and studies costing \$300,000 had to be approved by the Fish and Wildlife Service and State Department of Fish & Game. This took 10 years. In the interim airplanes risked propeller damage, and jets risked engine damage by ingesting rocks and pieces of old asphalt being thrown up by the nose-wheel tire. Then once the engineering was complete, the grants obtained and bid awarded, the Department asked the airport for \$127,000. Why? To compensate for destroying less than 10 tar plants prior to beginning the construction project. Current airport management (Rayvon Williams) refused, and asked the FAA and US Fish and Wildlife Service to intercede. Neither government agency was successful. The airport was left to complete the construction by modifying the construction process to avoid tarplants, adding more time and more cost.

Now that the taxiway reconstruction is complete, which required extraordinary persistence by airport management; the next challenge is another environmental hurdle. The old Visual Approach Slope Indicator (VASI) lights need to be replaced with modern Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) lights. PAPIs' are needed to provide additional glide slope guidance over houses on short final to runway 20. And they are crucial in low visibility instrument approaches to runway 2 coming in from the Monterey Bay. The lights require a four-foot square concrete base. You would think this should be simple? Nope. This potentially life saving installation is not allowed, because it might, might kill some tarweed. Does the Department think the weed is more important than human life and valuable property? And apparently it's OK with them if an aircraft has an accident

and kills some tarweed? It's a case of unreasonable priorities or fanatical obsession by pseudo environmentalists.

The question is: how many other airports are having their improvement and maintenance projects stopped or delayed--and costs escalated by unreasonable demands and policies? What can be done to change these absurd policies or rules? Have our local US and state representatives been contacted? Yes. And what have they done to curb the CA Department of F&G? Nothing.

Its time for the public and all pilot groups like local associations and the AOPA and Cal-Pilots to take action. It's a safety issue as well as an economic issue. 642

Airshow

(Editors Note: I was unable to attend the fly-in, but have included a link to the Santa Cruz Sentinels article)

http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/localnews/ci_26710535/annual-watsonville-air-show-thrills-delights.

Here's a link to a story in the Aviation eBrief put out by AOPA featuring Theresa!

<http://www.aopa.org/News-and-Video/All-News/2014/October/23/Watsonville-Fly-In-marks-golden-anniversary>

WPA meetings & WINGS Seminars

The following **WINGS Seminars** are scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2014:

October:..... **Rusty Pilot Update**

November..... No meeting or seminar

Decemeber EAA Holiday Party? Chris Law still needs to confirm with the EAA board, so keep an eye open for an email announcement.

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