

## **Truckee Tahoe Airport Introduces Innovative FLY SAFE Program**

Like any active mountain town, life in Truckee/Tahoe is a delicate balance of risk and reward. While we breathe the fresh air our forests provide, wildfires are a seasonal threat. While many enjoy the backcountry, skiing and hiking in pockets of pristine wilderness, the danger of getting lost or hurt while out of range can present a need for emergency services. In response, the Truckee Tahoe Airport District's (TTAD) new Strategic Plan emphasizes flight safety in our majestic and challenging environment. As part of their commitment to community and environmental safety, TTAD offers incentives to pilots to continue their education, ensuring they remain updated on the latest best practices, technology, and protocols. The airport's groundbreaking FLY SAFE Program leads the charge, paving a path for airport initiatives nationwide.

Truckee Tahoe Airport's FLY SAFE Takes Off FAA data has shown that pilots participating in continuing education and flight proficiency skills experience lower stress levels and fewer accidents. TTAD's new FLY SAFE Program partners with the FAA WINGS Pilot Proficiency Program, which encourages general aviation pilots to participate in various educational opportunities and build proficiency. The program was launched in early 2024 and is spearheaded by Jeff Menasco, TTAD's Director of Aviation. "In my experience as an Air Force pilot, we followed a very disciplined approach to flight proficiency, which doesn't easily exist for the typical general aviation pilot. So our approach with FLY SAFE is to provide local pilots a pathway to easily maintain an aviation continuing education curriculum and offset some of the cost to maintain flight proficiency with a Certified Flight Instructor," stated Menasco.

The FAA WINGS Program, a component of FLY SAFE, consists of learning activities and tasks in flight that address documented causes of aircraft accidents. Pilots who participate in the WINGS Program complete knowledge courses and engage in flight activities, with each Phase satisfying FLY SAFE Program requirements. Knowledge activities include ground training through live seminars or online courses, while flight activities involve specific maneuvers conducted with a Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) in the air.

Pilots are incentivized to participate in the program through airport use discounts. David Van Quest, TTAD Aviation and Community Coordinator, was instrumental in implementing the program. He discussed the benefits for participating pilots, stating, "Pilots with hangars at TTAD who participate in FLY SAFE are eligible for a \$70 monthly discount on rent, which comes out to \$840 annually. Non-hangar pilots are eligible for reimbursement of up to \$300 towards their CFI for flight activities, which we hope encourages program buy-in."

To receive the discounts, pilots must complete three Knowledge Credits, which can be earned through various channels, including seminars, online courses, and webinars. Additionally, they must engage in annual flight activities under the guidance of a Certified Flight Instructor (CFI), which completes the FAA Wings program.

TTAD's monthly seminars cover a range of aviation topics. The inaugural seminar on weather, held on February 26, 2024, at the airport terminal community room, attracted an impressive turnout of 92 pilots. In March, TTAD held a CFI roundtable with six instructors discussing hazards of flying in this environment with 66 pilots in attendance. This Friday, April 19, 2024, TTAD will host the next Fly Safe event with CFI and Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) Representative Philip Mandel, who will present 10 Ways to Make Your Flying 10 Times Safer. The discussion will review some common ways pilots get themselves in trouble and systematically discuss what we can do to mitigate those risks. Philip will also be staying the weekend to host an AOPA Rusty Pilots seminar on Saturday, April 20th. The Rusty Pilots seminar is a fun, interactive initiative to help pilots who have taken a break from aviation safely get back into the sky.

**Aligning With Airport Goals** The FLY SAFE Program specifically addresses goals in sections two and three of TTAD's recently launched strategic plan, Flight Path for Alignment. The plan is a roadmap that aligns airport staff, the board of directors, community values, airport priorities, and pilots along four focus areas: Economic Viability, Operational Efficiency, Natural Resource Conservation, and Social Responsibility.

Section two, which focuses on Operational Efficiency, includes updating policies and incentive programs around airport operations, safety, and community impacts. This consists of enhancing the Fly Quiet and Pilot Safety programs and reviewing and updating primary management compliance documents. FLY SAFE's integration with the FAA WINGS Pilot Proficiency Program and its incentives for pilot participation directly contribute to achieving these objectives.

Additionally, section three, which focuses on Social Responsibility, emphasizes effective communication and community engagement to strengthen relationships with local neighbors and the aviation community. FLY SAFE's monthly seminars, flight clinics, and engagement initiatives enhance pilot proficiency and foster open communication channels between TTAD, pilots, the community, and stakeholders, aligning with the strategic plan's overarching goals.

**Providing Safety Through Local Partnerships** Pilot education is just one aspect of TTAD's commitment to safety, which includes providing aid for urgent medical assistance,

firefighting support, and search-and-rescue operations. With REMSA-Care Flight's 24-hour emergency response facility stationed on-site, the airport assists those requiring critical medical attention in Truckee, Placer, and Nevada County.

The district also provides essential services like weather monitoring, navigation guidance, and emergency landing provisions. The California Highway Patrol utilizes the airport as a strategic staging ground for its aircraft, aiding in search missions and law enforcement endeavors. During the summer months, the airport houses firefighting aircraft poised to combat wildfires threatening the community and regional landscape.

These partnerships and the TTAD FLY SAFE Program meet airport goals by preparing local pilots for potential emergencies, helping to fulfill objectives in their strategic planning, and aligning with the airport's mission "to provide safe, high-quality services and facilities, reduce the impact on our airport neighbors and the environment, and invest in opportunities that increase community safety and provide sustained benefit to the entire Truckee Tahoe region."

"As an airport operator, the control we have over aviation safety ends at the pavement. By promoting continuing education of pilots and introducing the FLY SAFE program, we are proud to help extend our safety net into the sky," stated Van Quest.

Truckee Tahoe Airport invites all local and visiting pilots to participate in the FLY SAFE Program and join a community dedicated to aviation and community safety.

FLY SAFE Program and related seminar information:

<https://truckeetahoeairport.com/current-projects/fly-safe>

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