



Falcon Field Airport (FFZ) 'FLY FRIENDLY' PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the City of Mesa (City) doing to reduce noise over residential neighborhoods?

A: The proximity of the airport to residential areas makes some level of exposure to aircraft noise inevitable. However, the City is striving to minimize this as much as possible, while still serving the needs of the airport tenants and users by developing and implementing the 'Fly Friendly' noise abatement program at Falcon Field Airport (Airport).

Although the City owns and operates the Airport, it has no *legal* authority to restrict certain aircraft types or users from using the airport. Also, since it receives federal and state funding for airport capital improvement projects that help to keep the airport open and safe, it must remain open to the public and to any and all types of aircraft and users. However, the City can create *voluntary* noise abatement procedures and encourage pilots to use these procedures as much as possible without jeopardizing their safety.

In 2009, a set of twenty *voluntary* noise abatement recommendations were developed by a City-sponsored Ad Hoc Task Force. The task force was made up of airport tenants and businesses and members of the community. These recommendations can be viewed at http://mesaaz.gov/falcon_field/pdf/ffztaskforce/8-20recommendations.pdf. The City has embraced these recommendations and has been successful in implementing the majority of them. It is still working on implementing others, since some of them take more time and resources to implement.

The City's implementation role in the 'Fly Friendly' Program is focused on COMMUNICATION. By continually communicating its 'Fly Friendly' initiatives to the appropriate parties, it is leading the way in a cultural change among airport tenants and users that embraces the use of the voluntary noise abatement procedures whenever possible. In order to make others aware of the voluntary noise abatement program, the City has contacted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), pilots who do not base their aircraft at the Airport, other Arizona airports, fixed base operators at other airports who provide services to Falcon Field users, flight training academies/schools located at other airports in the Phoenix area, and various other aviation

businesses. It will soon be contacting licensed real estate brokers who market and sell homes near the Airport.

Q: How much of a priority is this for the City?

A: Minimizing aircraft noise so that neighbors can enjoy an excellent quality of life is very important to the City. However, safety is ALWAYS the #1 priority. This includes the safety of the aircraft pilot and passengers.

Q: Why does the City need the federal and state grant funds for the Airport?

A: Most airport capital improvements are expensive. The City is not in a financial position to fund all of these improvements itself and must seek assistance from the FAA and the State of Arizona to fund the design and construction of these improvements. Many of these improvements are safety-related.

Q: When do aircraft make the most noise?

A: Most noise complaints originate when an aircraft is either taking off or landing. Since individuals have a wide range of sensitivity to noise, aircraft noise may affect some people more than others. Also, the noise level can vary depending upon a number of other factors. These include but are not limited to:

- **Aircraft type and size.** A common misconception is that the larger the aircraft the louder they are; however this is not necessarily the case. Many newer aircraft have state-of-the art engines which are designed to limit their noise output.
- **Aircraft load.** Passenger and fuel loads can affect noise levels. Heavily loaded aircraft generally climb more slowly, thereby increasing the noise level.
- **Weather.** Aircraft may appear to be noisier during the following weather conditions:
 - 1) Cooler days when windows are open, and people are outside.
 - 2) Hot summer months. An aircraft's ability to gain altitude quickly decreases when outdoor temperatures are high. The aircraft remain lower for a longer period of time and need more power to climb.
 - 3) Low cloud cover. The sound resonates back to the ground instead of dispersing throughout the atmosphere.
 - 4) Air density is thick and the air is cool and dry. The air molecules are closer together, causing the sound to travel longer distances and appear louder.
- **Time of Day.** Nighttime or early morning aircraft operations may have a greater noise effect because of the absence of other sounds heard throughout the day from such things as automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, lawn mowers, televisions, and loud music.

Q: Who regulates the pilots?

A: The FAA regulates pilots. Pilots must complete a certain amount of training before the FAA will issue them a pilot's license. The FAA also regulates flight training schools and academies,

aircraft manufacturers, aircraft maintenance and repair businesses, and even its own FAA air traffic control tower personnel. There are substantial consequences for those who fail to comply with FAA rules and regulations. For example, in extreme cases, it could result in the loss of their pilot or operating licenses and/or substantial fines.

Q: Who should I contact about low-flying planes?

A: The FAA regulates aircraft when they are flying. You should contact the FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) at (480) 419-0111 if you think that an aircraft is flying unsafely.

Q: What are the rules regarding how low an aircraft can fly over a residential area?

A: Aircraft altitude requirements are established by the FAA. However, it is important to remember that most aircraft operating near the Airport are in the process of landing or taking off. In these cases, FAA regulations regarding altitude do not apply because they want the aircraft to be sure to take off and land safely.

However, when aircraft are lining up with other aircraft to land at the airport, they should be flying at or above the following altitudes:

- Small Single-Engine & Multi-Engine Aircraft (Example – most propeller aircraft): 1,006 feet above the ground
- High Performance Aircraft (Example – jets): 1,506 feet above the ground
- Helicopters: 506 feet above the ground

Q: Can the City fine pilots who don't comply with the noise abatement procedures?

A: The FAA prohibits the City from fining a pilot who chooses not to use the noise abatement procedures. This is why the City is promoting a 'Fly Friendly' culture among all tenants and users of the airport so that they will *choose* to comply with the procedures voluntarily.

Q: Why don't aircraft fly over the desert to the north and northeast of the airport instead of over residential neighborhoods?

A: Because there are many aircraft flying in the Phoenix metropolitan area, it is necessary for aircraft to fly over residential areas in order to avoid flying into other aircraft. The weather also plays an important role in determining where an aircraft flies.

For example, aircraft normally take off and land into the wind for safety reasons. Whenever the winds are calm (5 knots or less), pilots are asked by the FAA air traffic control tower to use the runways that send the aircraft over Longbow Golf Course, the commercial/industrial areas to the north, and the Salt River in order to minimize their effect on residential areas. However, if the winds are blowing from the southwest, pilots will take off and land to the southwest so that they are flying into the wind.

Regardless of the direction of the wind or which runway is used, aircraft will likely be flying over some homes simply because the Airport is located in a major metropolitan area where there are many homes.

Q: When is the airport open?

A: The FAA requires the Airport to remain open to the public 24 hours per day, 7 days per week on a non-discriminatory basis.

Q: Why doesn't the City of Mesa have curfews or restrictions similar to those at other airports such as Scottsdale, Burbank, and Orange County Airport?

A: Prior to 1990, some local governments passed restrictions on aircraft in flight. However, in 1990, Congress passed the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990 that makes it extremely difficult for airports to impose curfews and other noise and access restrictions. However, restrictions that were already in place at airports prior to the Act becoming law were "grandfathered" in. Since some airports already had restrictions in place, they were allowed to remain in effect. In Falcon Field's case, no restrictions existed prior to 1990. The following link contains the full text of this Act: <http://www.eltoroairport.org/issues/1990act-text.html>.

Q: How can I file a noise complaint?

A: You can file a noise complaint on the Airport's website: <http://apps.mesaaz.gov/FalconField/Comments.aspx>. Also, you can call the City's 'Fly Friendly' Program comment line if you do not have internet access. The telephone number is (480) 644-6647.

Q: What happens when I file a noise complaint?

A: All comments are entered into a database. Then they are matched up with a particular aircraft event, whenever possible. The City is in the process of purchasing additional tools to increase its flight tracking capabilities so that it can improve its capability of identifying the circumstances associated with a particular noise complaint. In the meantime, if you file a noise complaint, it is important that you provide as much information as possible about the date, the time, description of the aircraft (including the number on the tail) and what occurred. Because the City is a government agency, your comment or complaint is subject to public inspection through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Q: What are the City's future development plans for the Airport?

A: The Airport does not have room to expand from its current geographic size. However, the vacant land within the Airport boundaries will eventually be developed for aviation purposes. To learn more about future plans for the Airport, go to the following website link: http://www.mesaaz.gov/falcon_field/master-plan.aspx.

Q: Will the Airport have commercial airline service in the future?

A: Phoenix Sky Harbor and Phoenix-Mesa Gateway airports are the primary commercial service airports in the Phoenix area. Because these airports are able to accommodate commercial airlines now and in the future, it is unlikely that Falcon Field will ever have this type of service.

Q: Why can't aircraft be diverted away from flying over my house?

A: The FAA Air Traffic Control Division manages the airspace at and around the Airport. In addition to Falcon Field, there are several other airports nearby that also have aircraft landing and taking off (Phoenix Sky Harbor, Phoenix-Mesa Gateway, Chandler, and Scottsdale). Each airport is assigned a specific airspace area in which their customers can fly so that they don't overlap with each other. Since there is a limit to the total amount of airspace allotted to each airport, aircraft will invariably fly over homes located near them. For a view of the airspace over the Phoenix metropolitan area, see the following link:

<http://skyvector.com/?ll=33.460833333,-111.728333333&chart=121&zoom=3>. The areas in yellow are those that experience large volumes of aircraft traffic.

Once a pilot communicates with the FAA air traffic control tower, the aircraft is under the control of the FAA and the pilot. However, the City can monitor noise-sensitive areas and work with the FAA and pilots to encourage them to avoid flying over residential areas as much as possible as long as it is safe for them to do this.

Q: Why do we have to have so many airports in Phoenix? Why can't everyone just use Phoenix Sky Harbor or Phoenix-Mesa Gateway?

A: Since the Phoenix metropolitan area is so highly populated, there is a greater demand for airport facilities than can currently be met. Therefore, the FAA encourages cities like Mesa to operate and maintain airports, like Falcon Field, to relieve the amount of traffic and congestion that would occur if there were only one or two airports in the Valley. Without these 'reliever' airports, there would be higher safety risks for everyone.

Also, the Airport plays a key role in maintaining the economic health of Mesa. It connects residents and businesses to state, regional, national and international markets. The Airport contributes approximately \$2.3 billion each year to the local economy and helps to attract new businesses and jobs to the area.

Q: Who is ultimately responsible for aircraft noise and safety?

A: The Airport is part of the FAA National Air Transportation System and plays a vital role in the local, regional, and national aviation system. However, many different organizations and individuals share responsibility for the success of a noise abatement program. In Falcon Field's case, the City is just one of many responsible parties. Other responsible parties include:

1. The Federal Government

The National Air Transportation System exists primarily through the creation of federal legislation. The Federal Aviation Act of 1958 established the management of navigable airspace as a federal responsibility. Every facet of it is governed by the FAA. They control aircraft noise through:

- **Establishing aircraft noise emissions standards.** Aircraft are certified by the FAA for various levels of noise emissions. For example, all newly manufactured jet aircraft are certified to quiet "Stage 3" standards; however, older "Stage 2" corporate jet aircraft are still permitted to operate without mandatory noise-reducing "hush kits". Also, military aircraft are exempt from these federal regulations.
- **Managing the Air Traffic Control System.** The FAA is responsible for operating the airspace safely and efficiently. Airspace in the Phoenix metropolitan area is managed by the FAA Phoenix Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON), which supervises the Falcon Field air traffic control tower and other airport air traffic control towers in the state.
- **Regulating Pilot and Aircraft Safety.** FAA FSDO, located in Scottsdale, regulates this activity at Falcon Field and enforces pilot compliance with air traffic control instructions and flight regulations. Pilots are trained in procedures that are intended to be uniform at airports across the country. Noise abatement awareness is part of the required pilot training curriculum.

2. **State of Arizona.** State regulation of aircraft in flight is preempted by federal law. However, [Arizona Revised Statute 28-8486 Public Airport Disclosure](#) requires that public airport disclosure maps be provided to the State. The maps provide information to prospective homebuyers, real estate agents, and current homeowners about the airspace above their homes. The Public Airport Disclosure Map for Falcon Field is on file with the Arizona Secretary of State's Office. The link to it is: <http://www.re.state.az.us/AirportMaps/PublicAirports.aspx>.

3. **Pilots.** Pilots are responsible for operating their aircraft safely, while complying with all FAA rules governing flight. National, state, and local pilot associations actively encourage their members to 'fly friendly' and use noise abatement procedures whenever possible, consistent with safety.

4. **Residents.** Residents and prospective home buyers should research the location of airports and determine if aircraft noise would affect their quality of life.

Q: Where can I find more information about the Airport's Fly Friendly Program?

A: You can go to Falcon Field's website at http://mesaaz.gov/falcon_field/ffz.aspx for more information.

Community Outreach - Bringing Falcon Field Airport to YOU!

Have you ever wondered how the Airport operates and what's happening here now? We invite you to find out!

If you would like an Airport representative to visit your homeowners association, community group, or civic organization, we welcome the opportunity. Whether it's a quick 10-minute presentation or an hour's worth of questions and answers, feel free to contact us to schedule a date and time to attend one of your upcoming meetings.

Here are some examples of topics you may be interested in hearing about:

- Airport history
- Airport operations
- Economic impacts of the airport
- Airport plans for the future
- What the airport is doing to protect the community & environment, including the 'Fly Friendly' Program

We will do our best to customize a program *JUST FOR YOUR GROUP!* For more information about this or to plan a tour of the airport, contact Bernice Cuisinier at 480-644-4235 or bernice.cuisinier@mesaaz.gov.

FLY FRIENDLY ZONE

• *Falcon Field Airport* •