



Falcon Field Airport (FFZ) “FLY FRIENDLY” PROGRAM SUMMARY

Purpose

The Falcon Field Airport (Airport) “Fly Friendly” Program was created to establish and maintain a partnership between airport and community stakeholders. The goal of the Program is to minimize the effects of flight operations at Falcon Field on the surrounding community while also ensuring the long-term success of the airport.

“Fly Friendly” Program Stakeholders

- Pilots and airport users
- Airport businesses
- Citizens of Mesa
- City of Mesa (City)
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

General Background

The Airport is owned and operated by the City. However, FAA rules and regulations limit the City’s ability to impose flight restrictions, such as limitations on hours of flight operations and bans on specific aviation businesses and aircraft types. Furthermore, the FAA is the only governmental agency with the authority to direct and control aircraft in flight.

Ultimately, the pilot of an aircraft is in control of his/her aircraft and has the authority to make decisions about that aircraft for safety reasons. Since safety always comes first, these decisions may, at times, conflict with recommended aircraft noise abatement practices and procedures.

Brief History of the “Fly Friendly” Program

In 2007, the City began recommending that pilots voluntarily comply with nationally-recognized noise abatement guidelines published by the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association (AOPA), the National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA) and Helicopters Association International (HAI) when flying to and from Falcon Field. The City also invited stakeholders to participate on a Falcon Field Noise Committee for the purpose of establishing and maintaining an open dialogue regarding aircraft noise issues. The Committee met on a quarterly basis.

In April 2009, the City convened a Falcon Field Ad-Hoc Task Force to suggest reasonable solutions that balance and respond to the varying interests of the stakeholders. Task Force members included community members, airport tenants and businesses, and the airport’s largest flight training academy. In August 2009, the Task Force presented to the City a list of recommended strategies for reducing aircraft noise and safety concerns. The key categories of the “Fly Friendly” Program Recommended Strategies pertain to:

- Aircraft Operations
- Flight Training Commitments
- Capital Improvements
- Information and Education

Since then, several accomplishments have been made towards reducing aircraft noise and ensuring aircraft safety based upon the Task Force’s Recommended Strategies. These accomplishments include:

Key Category - Aircraft Operations:

FAA:

- Has increased the altitude where pilots should fly to 1,000 feet above the ground unless taking off or landing.
- Directs training flights to the north runway as much as possible.
- Directs aircraft to depart to the northeast when winds are calm.
- Requests aircraft to fly close to the airport when preparing to land in case they have an emergency and need to land quickly on the runway.
- Promotes the “Fly Friendly” Program at pilot workshops held at Falcon Field.

The City:

- Records pilot radio transmissions 24/7.
- Reviews all noise/safety complaints and follows up on specific incidents.
- Has updated the internet and telephone systems for filing and responding to noise complaints.

Key Category - Flight Training Commitments:

- The City meets regularly with the FAA air traffic control tower and CAE Global Academy.
- CAE and Falcon Executive Aviation flight training schools have provided written commitments to follow Task Force Recommendations whenever possible.
- As a courtesy to neighbors, CAE cancelled flight training operations in observation of Easter Sunday in 2010.

Key Category - Capital Improvements:

- The City completed expansion of the area where pilots prepare for departure to the north/northeast (paid for, in part, with FAA and State funds).
- Improvements are scheduled to be made this fall to the north runway (paid for, in part, with FAA funds).
- The City installed noise abatement reminder signs for pilots to read just prior to departing the airport.

Key Category - Information and Education:

The City:

- Tracks and analyzes citizen complaints on charts and graphs.
- Is working with FAA to install a flight tracking data system that will show: 1) Where an aircraft is flying; 2) the aircraft’s altitude; and 3) the time of day of the flight.
- Updated the “Fly Friendly” Pilot Guide.
- Sent Task Force Recommendations to all airport tenants.
- Will be requiring tenants to commit to “flying friendly” (when safety allows) as a condition of gaining access through City-owned airfield gates.
- Meets with aviation and area real estate groups to discuss the “Fly Friendly” Program.
- Disseminates and distributes “Fly Friendly” information through pilot directories, printed hand-outs, telephone information, the internet, tenant invoices, airport signage, and a “Fly Friendly” video.
- Holds a Falcon Field Open House every spring.
- Created the ‘Freddy’ the Falcon Program for children (our future pilots)

Next Steps to be Taken by the City:

- Collect and evaluate data once the flight tracking system is installed.
- Continue to research the possibility of including noise abatement info on pilot weather broadcasts.
- Expand outreach to area flight academies/schools, airports, and aviation groups.
- Create “Fly Friendly” promotional giveaways and distribute to pilots and community members.

