



# THE APA APPROACH

March 2026

APA NEWSLETTER



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CORPORATE SPONSOR

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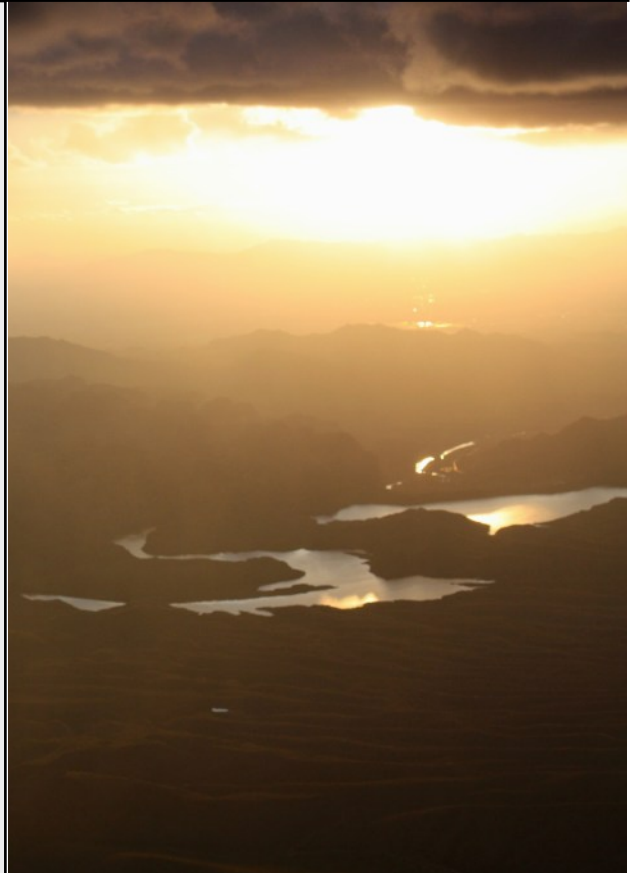
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# President's Report

Welcome to the March 2026 edition of the APA Approach!

Thanks to everyone that stopped by the APA and RAF booth at the AOPA Buckeye Air Fair. It was great to be able to spend some time with our members and make some new friends. I wanted to pass on a special thank you to the RAF volunteers that helped man the booth over the weekend. It was especially encouraging to hear that many of our members support both APA and The RAF and our shared mission of supporting the general aviation community in Arizona and nationwide.

I would be remiss if I didn't touch on the significant effort AOPA and the City of Buckeye put in to make sure that a complex event like this runs smoothly. From my perspective, the Buckeye event is an important opportunity to bring the Arizona and Western states GA community together to discuss the expanding set of issues we face and focus on the fundamentals of all things aviation related. This is especially true with regard aviation safety, and I look forward to an expanded set of safety forums to include the FAA Safety Team at next year's event.



I'm sure that many of you have been following the developments related to the Falcon Field landing fee proposal. AOPA, APA and the Aviation Safety Advisory Group of Arizona (ASAG) have been collaborating on a response to the city providing some perspective and our recommendations as the GA community, including the tenants and users of Falcon Field. We have had a number of discussions with the city throughout this process and we have recommended that the city council vote for scheduled for March 23<sup>rd</sup> be cancelled until the following high-level actions related to collaboration and financial transparency have been completed:

- Establishing a Falcon Field Advisory Board
- Completing a Financial and Fee Structure Review
- Evaluating Alternate Revenue Sources
- Chartering an airport operations improvement group to develop realistic changes to the cur-



rent Fly Friendly noise abatement program

You can find our letter and the full details of our recommendations here: [https://azpilots.org/images/documents/2026\\_letters/falcon\\_field\\_fee\\_proposal\\_aopa\\_apa\\_asag.pdf](https://azpilots.org/images/documents/2026_letters/falcon_field_fee_proposal_aopa_apa_asag.pdf). We understand that the city has also been reviewing the basis of current fee proposal and has consulted the FAA as well.

In spite of our group's input and the collective input from the GA community, I'm confident that the city will proceed with the city council vote on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. AOPA, APA and ASAG will be represented at the meeting and I strongly encourage local pilots and Falcon Field tenants to attend this meeting as well. You can find the meeting agenda and details for public attendance and comment at <https://www.mesaaz.gov/Government/City-Council-Meetings>.

On a related subject, Arizona House Bill 2210 - which aims to prevent collecting fees from aircraft owners and operators using ADS-B - is making progress in the state legislature. HB.2210 passed in the House and has been introduced in the Senate. It is scheduled to be voted on in the Senate Appropriations/Transportation/Technology committee Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>. APA and representatives from the pilot and aircraft owner community will be present to testify to ensure the committee understands the intent of the bill and the criticality of preserving the original safety and efficiency intent of ADS-B. Keep an eye on the APA Facebook page for updates from this week's vote.

A few schedule updates to wrap up for this month:

**March Grapevine Daytrip/Camping Weekend – March 20 – 22** – the March event will be a little different since we will combine a Day Trip and Camping Weekend and we are looking forward to a great event. Keep an eye out for updates on our Facebook page and if you have any questions, you can reach out to Leanne Tawoda ([leanne@azpilots.org](mailto:leanne@azpilots.org)) or Mike McCann ([mikem@azpilots.org](mailto:mikem@azpilots.org)).

**APA Annual Meeting – May 16** - Our annual membership meeting is scheduled for Saturday May 16, so please mark your calendars and save the date. The meeting will be held at Highlands Church, 9050 E. Pinnacle Peak Road, near KSDL. We have a full agenda lined up and we look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you for supporting APA's mission through your membership and please feel free to reach out to me at [chris@azpilots.org](mailto:chris@azpilots.org) if you have any comments, concerns or questions.

Fly Safe,

*Chris*



# Volare Hangars

*New  
Open!*

**Pegasus Airpark 5AZ3**  
Queen Creek, AZ



**Stellar Airpark P19**  
Chandler, AZ

*Coming  
Soon!*



## LIVE - WORK - PLAY - FLY



Fee Simple Hangar Condos



Premium Construction



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Mixed Uses Allowed



Up to 90% Financing



Low Fuel Cost

### Pegasus Airpark 5AZ3

34 Hangars built in 2024, remaining availability:

- two 60' x 60' | two 80' x 60' | one 80' x 80'
- 2 custom home lots with taxiway access

### Stellar Airpark P19

27 Hangars + 11 tie downs to be built in 2025/26

- Three sizes 46' x 40' | 59' x 60' | 92' x 60'
- Starting reservations summer 2025



**VOLARE HANGARS | 623.277.0000 | Info@VolareHangars.com**

# Executive Director's Report

Jim Timm — March 2026

The breakfast flights on Saturday morning are good to have an excuse to go flying. These morning flights have been a bit cool at the start or at civil dawn, but in general the temperatures have been a bit warmer than normal. Let's hope this isn't a harbinger of what's to come as the months move closer to summer. Anyway, in any event, let's go flying.

I strongly suspect that many of you may not care very much about what's happening at Mesa Falcon Field, but we in APA are very concerned that many of the negative things that are happening will also happen to many of the airports in the Phoenix area and possibly slop over to other airports in the state. Most of the airports in the state belong to the Arizona Airport Association, and what is happening at Falcon Field is no doubt a major item of discussion. The introduction of Landing Fees has been presented to the group some time ago, and it appears that some airports are "on the fence" about the issue. It is our concern that if Falcon Field imposes landing fees, or significantly increased fees, other airports in the state may view this as an opportunity to do the same. This item will be on the Mesa City Council Agenda on March 23 at 5:45 pm in the City Hall, located at 20 E. Main St., Mesa, AZ. Comments will be heard, and we urge pilots and Falcon Field tenants attend, and express their opinion. Note: Each speaker will be limited to 2 - 3 minutes, depending on the number of speakers.

While we are waiting for action on a bill before our legislators in Washington to suppress the commercial use of the ADS-B information that many of us transmit, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that a member of the Arizona Safety Advisory Group who is well connected with members of our State Legislature, has taken action to have a bill presented, and heard in the Arizona Legislature that would prevent the commercial use of the ADS-B information that's being transmitted. In spite of the fact that this is really a safety issue, the Arizona Airport Association is still unsure about supporting this bill because they think that they may still want to use the ADS-B information for generating income for the airports.

Remember, ADS-B information is not the only means for implementing landing fees. They have used electronic photographs to verify an airplane's landing for some time.



## MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

### FAA

The FAA had reopened the comment period for its proposed Part 108 rule governing beyond visual line of sight drone operations, and they were seeking additional feedback on electronic conspicuity, and right-of-way provisions. We hope that many of you had responded to this



latest request for additional comment. Anyway, now we will have to wait and see what the final decision is.

In the meantime, we haven't heard of anything that would impact your flying activity, but please be assured that APA will always be on the alert for any rule changes that could have an impact on your flying activity, and immediately inform you.

## AIRSPACE

Last month we mentioned that an NPRM was in the Federal Register regarding a proposed increase in size of the class delta airspace for Chandler and Gateway airports. The deadline for comments was the first part of February so it will be some time before anything happens. In the meantime, we will just have to wait and see what will finally happen.

However, I'm still unaware of any activity, or proposed activity, at Chandler that would warrant this proposed increase in its size of Class Delta Airspace.

We must realize that the good weather we enjoy is the reason we have a lot of parachute activity happening around the central part of the state, and if the weather cools off, the parachute activity will no doubt also increase. Avoid flying near airports with known parachute activity and always be extra vigilant for parachutists. Note parachute icons on the charts as this is a warning that there might be parachutists in the area. A lot of this present parachute activity will consist of experienced foreign parachutists that are here to learn, and practice new tactical procedures, and some of this jumping may be high altitude jumping being initiated at Flight Levels, with parachutists descending through airspace far removed from their final landing site. Be advised, if you can determine the surface wind direction, your safest place will be downwind of their Drop Zone. Always check NOTAMS for parachute activity on your route of flight, and if possible, use Flight Following for your proposed flight, and monitor in-route facility frequencies for parachute activity.

## SAFETY

We sincerely regret the passing of Craig Tompkins of the FAA SDL FSDO because Craig had always provided us with substantial FAA input for the Accident/Incident report, he also provided all the information for the Pilot Deviation, and NMAC Reports. As a result, the Accident report will have some information missing, and there won't be a Pilot Deviation Report or NMAC Report until a suitable replacement is found.

The Accident numbers are down, and it is unfortunate that we had fatalities reported this month. We really made a bad start of the year. From the first of the year to now we have had 14 accidents reported and of these 14, there have been 8 fatalities. This is a very bad percentage of fatalities vs accidents, and we must not continue with this trend.



For the details of the current accidents, see my accident report located elsewhere in the newsletter.

Members, please continue to send accident information to [jtimm@azpilots.org](mailto:jtimm@azpilots.org) with the date, location, aircraft make, if anyone got hurt, and with as much detail as possible. Thank you.

Before takeoff we sometimes get reports from ATC that drones are operating near the airport. We realize that these drones are very difficult to see, and avoid, and educating many of these drone operators of the proper rules of operation is a problem we all face. So please be vigilant.

## CONSTRUCTION

A major hangar project is still underway on the south side of Phoenix Deer Valley Airport (DVT), and some taxiways are being moved to comply with FAA standards. Some of this activity has been completed, but some activity remains. This results in changes to the normal taxi routing, so be sure to get airport NOTAMS, and study them before your arrival.

Tucson International Airport still has a major construction project underway. There are also numerous other smaller projects underway that could also impact your arrival, so always check the latest airport NOTAMS and study them well before your arrival.

There are many airports around the state that also have construction projects in progress or will have projects starting soon. We don't have specific details on all these projects at the moment, but we would urge you to always check for NOTAMS at your destination airport so you don't have a surprise upon your arrival.

APA is working with airports around the state assisting with the updating of their Airport Master Plan by providing the pilot, and aircraft owner's perspective in the process. The Airport Master Plan Update process usually requires about a year for completion.

## THINGS TO DO - PLACES TO FLY FOR BREAKFAST

The fly-in breakfast at Coolidge Municipal Airport (P08) is on the first Saturday of the month.



On the second Saturday of the month, consider flying down to Ryan Field (RYN), west of Tucson for breakfast or lunch at Ritchie's Restaurant. They are open daily from 6 am to 2 pm to serve you.

Grapevine is open full-time, and generally the third Saturday weekend camping and cookouts are planned. Check the APA newsletter for a possible weekend change. The camp host will prepare the main course for dinner, and campers, please bring a side dish or dessert to

share. **Grapevine, which lies within a National Forest, is heavily used by the Forest Service for fighting wildfires, and the Military for Special Training.**

There is a fly-in breakfast on the last Saturday of the month at the Casa Grande Municipal Airport (CGZ). The new “Sky High” Cafe, is open from Thursday thru Friday from 9 am-12 pm, and Saturday thru Monday from 8 am-12 pm with a limited menu. However, the Casa Grande Masonic Lodge will continue to be serving breakfast in the air-conditioned terminal from 7 to 11 am on the last Saturday of the month.



When you fly to any of these venues, be sure to look for the Fly Arizona Passport Placard at the restaurant, and also at the airport terminal. If you haven't, scan the placard with your smart phone to get credit on the passport program for being there.

**Check with the APA Getaway Flights program and online calendar for fun weekend places to fly.**

*Jim*



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# “SiriusXM is like a friend in the cockpit.”

Nick Hoffman, Country Music Artist, Pilot, Podcaster & TV Host



“If the goal is situational awareness, SiriusXM is your ace in the hole. When you’re in the clouds and you’re able to pull SiriusXM’s weather information up to see a visual picture of what’s in front of you, what’s around you, and what’s coming up, it can make IMC feel like you have a friend in the cockpit.”

## Nick Hoffman

~750 hours, Instrument Rating, Commercial Multi Engine Student  
Country Music Artist, Pilot, Podcaster and Host of Nick’s Wild Ride

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or watch why Nick chooses to fly with  
SiriusXM Aviation by scanning  
the QR code.



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Flight Review

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Enstrom F28C \$390/Hour

Glenn Roberts – Airplane & Helicopter CFI

602 463-5528

ArizonaSkiesAviation@gmail.com

# APA Volunteer Opportunities

As an all-volunteer organization, APA relies on the generosity of our members and volunteers to accomplish our mission. To ensure that we're communicating volunteer opportunities, we will begin publishing a Volunteer Opportunity summary in the newsletter going forward.

Please take a look at the volunteer opportunities listed below and reach out to the APA point of contact for more details if you are interested in helping out.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Opportunities		APA Point of Contact
<b>APA Member Services</b>	Mailing Donor Thank You Cards Mailing Membership Cards and a Welcome Letters Clothing Store Inventory and Shipping Orders	Sue ( <a href="mailto:sue@azpilots.org">sue@azpilots.org</a> )
	<b>March '26 (Mar. 20-22)</b>	<b>Chris Nugent and Rick Bosshardt</b>
<b>Grapevine Monthly Camping Weekend Volunteer Hosts Needed!</b>	<b>April '26 (Apr. 17-19)</b>	<b>Brian Harrison</b>
		Leanne ( <a href="mailto:leanne@azpilots.org">leanne@azpilots.org</a> )
<b>Airstrip Maintenance Volunteers Needed!</b>	Grapevine (88AZ) (General Maintenance—watch the APA Facebook page for dates)	Mike Andresen ( <a href="mailto:grapevine@azpilots.org">grapevine@azpilots.org</a> )
	Red Creek (Fill Ruts, etc.)	Tommy Thomason ( <a href="mailto:redcreek@azpilots.org">redcreek@azpilots.org</a> )
	Double Circle Ranch (Airstrip Shoulder Mowing - Help Needed!)	In Work Thanks to Josh Leavitt and the Bryce Families! ( <a href="mailto:doublecircle@azpilots.org">doublecircle@azpilots.org</a> )
	Forepaugh (General Strip Maintenance)	Tommy Thomason ( <a href="mailto:forepaugh@azpilots.org">forepaugh@azpilots.org</a> )

**Got great aviation photos that you'd like to share?**

[newsletter@azpilots.org](mailto:newsletter@azpilots.org)

## ISO 2-4 Place Backcountry Airplane

Looking to buy a 2-4 place airplane for backcountry work.

Call: Bob at (602) 228-9145  
Email: [bob@flightskills.com](mailto:bob@flightskills.com)



**CLASSIFIEDS**

## ISO Partnership Tucson Area

Looking for a Partnership in Columbia/Cirrus

Contact: Michael Hutchinson  
(831) 776-2210  
Email: [hutchinson93922@gmail.com](mailto:hutchinson93922@gmail.com)

# FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

## HAZARDS AND HOT SPOTS

**Deer Valley Airport (DVT)** is a predominantly business, and general aviation airport. It boasts a large permanently based aircraft population. Located approximately 17 miles north of Phoenix Sky Harbor it is a convenient alternative to the larger and more congested airport. This convenience has led DVT to become one of the busiest general aviation airports in the country. DVT is home to several high activity flight schools, which, along with the large number of itinerant aircraft, results in an extremely busy air traffic environment. [View a printable Pilot Handbook](#) of the DVT information



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xYS3Zyn3uA>



**Steven D Huff**

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[learaviator@yahoo.com](mailto:learaviator@yahoo.com)

602-390-4246

I am a DAR-T and work in Buckeye (10AZ) all week. I am able to do Field Approvals, Ferry Permits, Airworthiness Certification for Standard and Experimental aircraft, 8130 tags, Export Certificates of Airworthiness Certificates and Replacement Airworthiness Certificates. I am open to all ideas for Field Approvals and can help figure out a way to get your project approved.

**Steven Huff** [learaviator@yahoo.com](mailto:learaviator@yahoo.com) 602-390-4246

### **C150D parts**

Price: \$12,345

Contact: Mark Helley

(928) 261-8291

[azhelleys@gmail.com](mailto:azhelleys@gmail.com)

### **1970 Mooney M20E Chaparral**

Price: \$95,000

Hector Maldonado

(602) 810-0382

[az.pit.viper72@gmail.com](mailto:az.pit.viper72@gmail.com)



### **Prop Bulkhead**

Price: \$12,345

Contact: Mark Helley

[azhelleys@gmail.com](mailto:azhelleys@gmail.com)

### **Cessna 182 RG Partnership**

Price: \$115.00

Will Worthington

(480) 748-3578

Email: [willw62az@gmail.com](mailto:willw62az@gmail.com)



**CLASSIFIEDS**

# Featured

## March 21 Day Trip: Grapevine Airstrip – 88AZ

by Mike McCann

### March Day Trip:

**Grapevine Airstrip – 88AZ**

**Saturday, March 21, 2026**

### Trip Detail Recap:

- This is a combined Day Trip / APA monthly Grapevine backcountry campout.
- 88AZ Arrival time: 8:15 – 9:00am (please stagger arrival times).
- A campout breakfast will be hosted by our fellow APA backcountry members.
- This event is limited to APA members only.

### IMPORTANT – space is limited:

*Due to limited aircraft parking, this event is limited to 10 aircraft...RSVP is required for this event. When the 10 aircraft slots are filled, you'll automatically be added to the wait list.*

*No limits on the number of people...so bring a friend(s), spouse or someone new!*

**RSVP**

Greetings fellow APA members. The October combined “Day Trip & Weekend Getaway” trip to Monument Valley was a huge success and the first time we combined two groups of APA members for a great destination and unique experience to share.

For our Day trip in March, we are once again picking a new and unique destination and will join fel-





low APA backcountry camping members. The Grapevine backcountry airstrip (88AZ) is a prized location with a 3,800' x 40' paved runway on the edge of Roosevelt Lake. "Grapevine" exists today solely due to the huge volunteer effort of many APA members over several years. APA's Backcountry pilots spent countless work weekends repairing the runway and adjoining campground facilities to make it accessible to most aircraft (and not only backcountry airplanes).

March's Day trip will be an opportunity to introduce pilots to Grapevine and experience the amazing Arizona scenery. Our combined event also provides a great opportunity to meet some of our APA backcountry members who regularly camp at 88AZ's campground. The backcountry folks

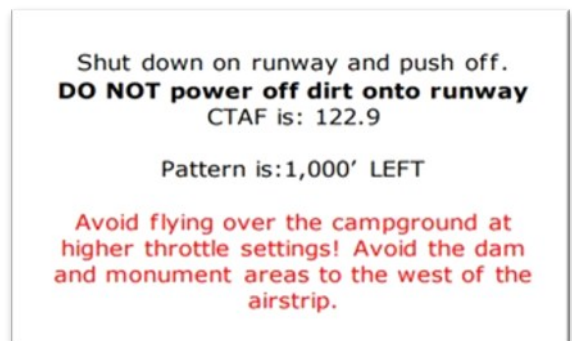
will be cooking a camp-style breakfast for everyone after the Day Trip group arrives. Breakfast will include pancakes, sausage links, O.J., Coffee, Banana Bread with/without nuts and Sourdough Pumpkin Bread. Butter, and syrup (reg and no sugar). There's no cost for the breakfast, but donations will be accepted. Since there is NO vehicle access to Grapevine, all the supplies must be flown in for our breakfast. I want to give a huge thanks to Leanne Tawoda who is APA's Grapevine campout coordinator. Leanne is coordinating all the logistics for our visit and making our Saturday morning visit possible! THANK YOU LEANNE!!

### **After breakfast hike to edge of Roosevelt Lake**

Given the amazing scenery surrounding 88AZ, we'll plan to take a short hike to the edge of Roosevelt Lake after breakfast. It's a great place for pictures, capturing both the lake and the surrounding mountains. Everyone is encouraged to spend some time exploring this unique location after breakfast...you won't regret it!

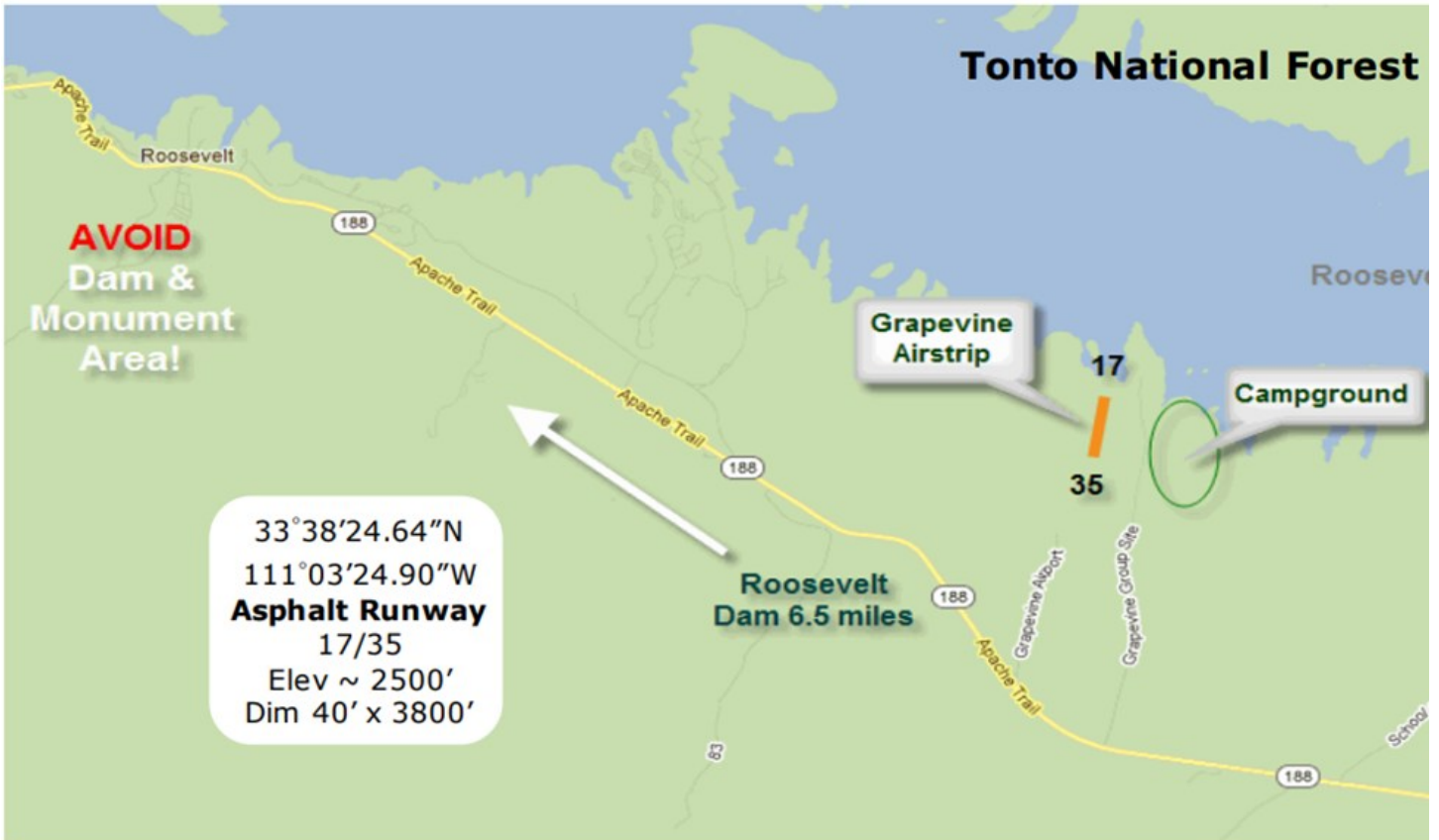
### **Very Important – 88AZ Backcountry airport etiquette:**

Backcountry airports are by definition located in quiet and remote locations. Imagine you're landing your airplane inside a national park with people quietly sleeping on both sides of the runway. Minimizing unnecessary aircraft noise and dust is very important in backcountry operations.



### **88AZ arrival & parking instructions:**

1. Monitor 122.90 when nearing 88AZ. Someone on the ground will communicate approximate winds and active runway.
2. All arriving aircraft will shut down while on the asphalt. No engine operations on the gravel or dirt.
3. **Parking instructions will be communicated on 122.90 via a parking marshall.**
  - a. If you're able to park on the dirt, you'll be directed to the mid-field parking area.
  - b. If unable to park on the dirt, aircraft will be directed to the north or south ends of the runway (be prepared to walk back to the mid-field camp area).
4. When it's time to depart, aircraft parked on the dirt will be moved by hand back to the airstrip asphalt prior to engine start.



**Wrap-Up:**

As always, be sure to thoroughly preflight both yourself and your aircraft. And do a thorough flight planning as would be required for any cross-country flight.

Before your flight, review the two YouTube video on aircraft operations at Grapevine. The first is very informative and will help in your pre-flight planning for Grapevine. However, the first video is 6 years old and states that the runway surface is deteriorated (which is no longer accurate).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuBWHmfpdc8>

The second YouTube video was shot 3 years ago and offers more current views of the runway conditions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lc2eLqapwo>

Also, be sure to review the Grapevine safety brochure found at the attached website. Some of the brochure info has been noted in this announcement, but not everything.

<https://azpilots.org/images/attachments/GrapevineInfoPamphlet.pdf>

Lastly, 88AZ is a non-tower-controlled airport, so pilots are encouraged to review Advisory Circular 90-66C for proper operation in non-towered airports: [https://www.faa.gov/regulations\\_policies/advisory\\_circulars/index.cfm/go/document.information/documentID/1041885](https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/advisory_circulars/index.cfm/go/document.information/documentID/1041885)

**Hazards**

- Varying surface conditions
- Veering off RWY may damage aircraft
- 40' width with stumps along edges
- 3800' length with 1.3% slope
- 51' rise to the south
- Frequent military use and activity!
- Crosswinds common
- Potential downdrafts
- Wildlife on runway

*Conditions at Grapevine vary daily and the information contained herein may be inaccurate and must not be used for navigation or aviation decision making!*

Feel free to contact me with any questions ([daytrips@azpilots.org](mailto:daytrips@azpilots.org)) and we'll look forward to seeing you.

Safe flying,

Mike



#### DISCLAIMER

Neither the APA, the RAF, or the U.S.F.S. encourage your participation at these events, and you are responsible for, and are the final authority as to, the operation of your aircraft. **By your decision to land, you assume all risk for yours and your passenger's safety!**

## Aviator's Code of Conduct

### Preamble:

The Arizona Pilot's Association (APA) and The Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) are partnering to advance backcountry aviation in Arizona, and every pilot plays a part in our success. Each of us is an ambassador to the non-flying public, and to the land managers responsible for the airstrips we enjoy. Please do your part by practicing these few rules. We want to be the friendliest and most helpful recreational users these land managers work with!

### Pilots will abide by all State and Federal regulations regarding the use of aircraft.

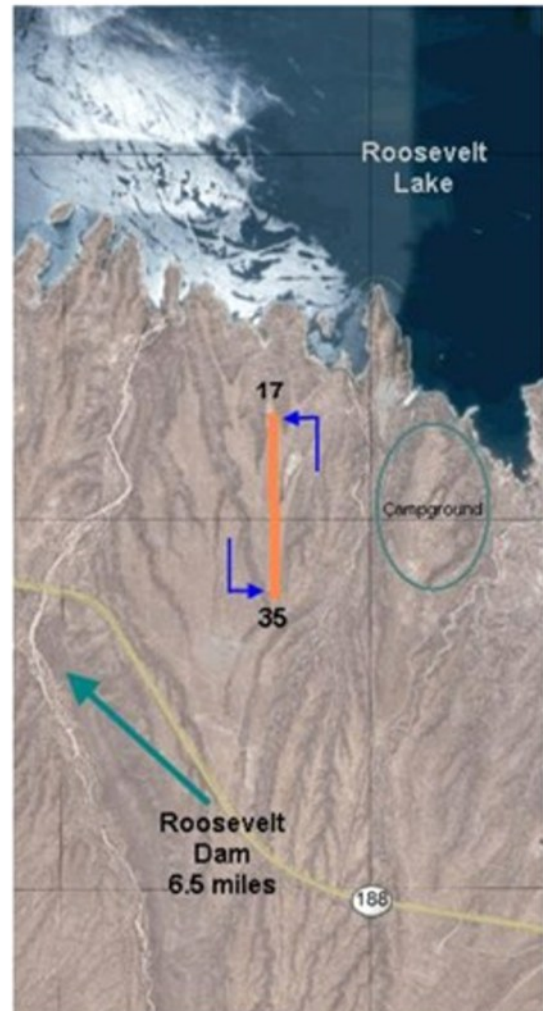
- Act with all possible courtesy to those on the ground who are hunting, horseback riding or observing wildlife, by maintaining reasonable distance and altitude.
- Know wildlife refuge boundaries as well as seasonal areas of wildlife congregation to avoid inadvertent low level over-flights.
- Avoid putting potential stress on wildlife.
- Get appropriate permissions when required, prior to using an airstrip.

### Pilots will practice good wilderness and backcountry flying ethics.

- Keep the noise signature of the aircraft to a safe minimum.
- Practice "leave no trace" camping. Fly it in, fly it out.
- Avoid very early morning departures unless safety of flight demands a deviation.
- Be courteous to other users in the area.
- Do not use these airstrips for training purposes or just to say "I've been there."
- Keep the aircraft clean of noxious weed seed to prevent the spread of weeds to backcountry airstrips.
- Participate whenever possible in work events to maintain these airstrips.

### Honor the Land Manager's Vision and Rules for the Airstrip

Many hours of negotiations and work go into each backcountry airstrip and trust is earned through fulfilling our commitments to the land managers. A few rogue pilots can destroy this trust and set our backcountry efforts backwards for years. On the other hand, honoring these agreements can go a long way towards these efforts, and even opening new airstrips, so get to know the vision and rules for each airstrip.



**Shades, Picnic Tables, Fire Ring with Cooking Grate and Vault Toilet Available**

[If you value this airstrip, please donate to help us preserve it!](#)

**Conditions at Grapevine vary daily and the information contained herein may be inaccurate and must not be used for navigation or aviation decision making!**

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# Forepaugh Red Creek

By Tommy Thomason

Backcountry Enthusiasts,

A group of about 9 pilots and volunteers recently flew and / or drove to Forepaugh to do some clean up. We spent a few hours trimming back the mesquite from the edges of the runway and grooming the runway. The windsock was replaced and the segmented circle organized and painted. This is a great spot while the temps are cool enough to camp.

Red Creek is in OK shape, but the most recent rains left lots of cobble bumps from the cattle walking in the mud and leaving tracks that have now hardened. A couple of us filled in one of the east end trenches and another one still needs attention. The approach end aimpoint rocks need painted but are still fairly visible.

Have Fun, Be Safe,

*Tommy*



# February Day Trip Recap: Nogales, Arizona (KOLS)

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by Mike McCann

February's Day Trip to Nogales, Arizona turned out to be a wonder day to fly. Cool temperatures and calm winds made for a great flight for all who attended. Twenty-two APA members and 12 aircraft rendezvoused at KOLS for their annual Open House. Lots of local vendors and governmental agencies had information tents and free giveaways for everyone making their way around the airport.

Beyond all the "normal" things you'd expect to see at an airport open house, KOLS offered some very unique activities....such as a "strong man contest". The local strong man, pictured below, was challenged to see if he could pull a Cessna 414 UPHILL (the local ramp has an incline). What made it even more challenging was the fact that the 414 tires were badly in need of air and it was clear that the airplane hadn't been moved in a long time!

Several of us caught him doing a "warm-up" pull just to see if he could get the aircraft to move at all (which he did). We had to fly back to Phoenix before his scheduled uphill pull attempt was to occur so we don't know if he was successful, but I'd have to bet he was.

## Coming in March:

Don't forget our "rain date" for the Grapevine breakfast fly-in is Saturday, March 21. Be sure to look for the eBlast. This is a special, joint event with APA's back-



*Strongman wearing a custom harness to try pulling a Cessna 414 uphill!*

country folks. The number of participating aircraft will be limited for this event so be sure to RSVP if you want to attend.

Feel free to contact me with any questions ([daytrips@azpilots.org](mailto:daytrips@azpilots.org)) and we'll look forward to seeing you.

Safe flying,

Mike



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## **WE NEED PILOTS! FOR A FREE CHALLENGED KIDS FLY-DAY EVENT**

March 28<sup>th</sup> at the Deer Valley Airport



**Above & Beyond USA,  
a 501(c)(3) charity, is holding a  
Free Fly Day for Challenged Kids**



We are excited to invite pilots to bring their aircraft and join us in creating unforgettable experiences for challenged kids! With the help of you as a volunteer pilot, we are able to put lots of smiles on these kids faces. And after the flight, you get to present your special co-pilot with their flight wings and certificate!

### **What is a Fly-Day Event?**

An Above and Beyond USA event is for challenged children between the ages of 5 to 18. These children get an opportunity to **actually fly in a small aircraft!** The **FREE** event is staged inside an airport hangar where lots of activities, entertainment, and lunch is provided. After the flyer returns from their flight, they are presented with wings and a flight certificate from their pilot, **'YOU'**! They then walk down the 'Red Carpet' to cheers of congratulations and photographs.



**Scan here or go to site below fore more information:**  
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At the Deer Valley Airport**  
*Pilots receive **FREE** light breakfast  
and grilled lunch*



**Scan above to  
experience a pilot's  
view of a Fly-Day Event!**

<https://aboveandbeyondusa.org/gallery/>

# VFR into IMC

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by Paul Wiley

## **Background:**

This article addresses the subject of pilots flying inadvertently from VFR conditions into Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC). This is commonly referred to as: "VFR into IMC". Although VFR into IMC is a rather small percentage of overall accidents, it is the number 1 cause of weather-related fatal accidents. A stunningly high percentage of VFR into IMC accidents are fatal, nearly 75%! It is also noteworthy that approximately a third of these accidents involve instrument rated pilots. Another stunning fact: instrument rated pilots are almost twice as likely as non-instrument rated pilots to be involved in a VFR into IMC accident.



## **The Importance of Proper Preflight Planning:**

Preflight planning skills are just as important (if not more so) than flying skills. Why? Because if your preflight planning is inadequate then no matter how good your flying skills are you may not be able to complete the planned flight safely. One example would be departing into weather conditions where thunderstorms are likely to develop along your route of flight. It is very important to establish personal minimums and to stick to them. Depending upon a pilot's experience, skill and proficiency these personal minimums may be above the FAA regulatory minimums for a VFR or IFR flight. The objectives of a preflight briefing are 1) to comply with FAR 91.103, and 2) to ensure that you (the pilot) given your experience, pilot certificates, ratings, skill level and proficiency can complete the planned flight safely. For non-instrument rated pilots the best way to avoid becoming another VFR into IMC accident statistic is to avoid flying VFR into IMC in the first place. For instrument rated pilots the best defense is to maintain instrument flying proficiency. AOPA's Air Safety Institute recommends, in addition to the FAA's IFR currency requirements, one hour of actual or simulated instrument flight and one instrument approach in the previous 30 days, plus completing an Instrument Proficiency Check (IPC) within the previous six calendar months. So, it's all about safety!



## **Why VFR into IMC?**

Flying into bad weather can sneak up on a pilot, and it is easy to imagine how this could happen.

So, what are some of the reasons these VFR into IMC accidents happen? A common thread in these VFR into IMC accidents is the pilot's psychology. That is the pilot's mind-set and attitude toward flying into and around marginal VFR conditions or "bad" weather, especially at night. Most accidents are the result of more than one factor. Accident investigators refer to the "accident chain", or the series of events that ends up resulting in an accident. VFR into IMC accidents are no exception to this rule. Often one good decision made at the right time can break the chain and prevent an accident. For example: deciding to divert to an alternate airport instead of pressing on into worsening weather conditions whether or not you are an instrument rated and highly experienced pilot.

Antidotally I can relate one VFR into IMC accident that was told to me by a pilot friend a few years ago. The pilot involved in this accident was a veteran Air Force pilot who went on to fly for the airlines and was a captain for a major US airline at the time of the accident. The pilot was returning to Arizona alone from Southern California in a high performance single-engine airplane at night on an IFR flight plan in IMC. ATC lost radar and radio contact with this flight somewhere over the mountains in Southern California. Searchers found the wreckage late the following day when the weather had cleared. I heard from my friend that investigators believe the plane may have "iced up" resulting in a loss of control in flight. My friend was devastated by this accident and the loss of his long-time friend. He bemoaned the fact that the pilot attempted this flight at night in bad weather. He said: "why couldn't he just wait until the following day to fly home"? Obviously, this highly qualified and experienced pilot thought that he could complete this flight safely. Tragically he was dead wrong.

#### Some common causes of VFR into IMC:

- **Plan continuation bias.** This is the unconscious cognitive bias to continue with the previous plan in spite of changing conditions. Sometimes this is referred to as "get-there-itis" where the pilot allows his strong desire to get to his original destination to negatively affect his decision making; and thus his decision-making ability, situational awareness and risk management skills all suffer. In a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) review of 37 accidents investigated by the [National Transportation Safety Board](#), it was determined that almost 75% of the tactical decision errors involved in these 37 accidents were related to decisions to continue on the original plan. The study further noted that there were important clues suggesting an alternate course of action was needed, but these clues were ignored by the pilot (s). This indicates a tactical loss of situational awareness which often leads to an accident.



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Depending upon a pilot's experience, skill and proficiency these personal minimums may be above the FAA regulatory minimums for a VFR or IFR flight.

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- **Fear of Failure.** Once a pilot has committed to a flight plan, especially when passengers or others are counting on the pilot to complete the planned flight, there is a strong desire not to fail to complete the flight as planned. It is believed that the accident involving John F. Kennedy Jr. where he continued into weather conditions beyond his ability to manage, was largely due to his desire not to disappoint his wife and her sister. His continuing into marginal weather conditions eventually resulted in a loss of control and a fatal accident. This accident could have been prevented by a timely decision to make a 180-degree turn and divert to an airport with better weather conditions.



- **Previous Experience.** When a pilot has completed a flight successfully, especially when he has completed the same flight in similar weather conditions many times, there is a strong bias for the pilot to believe that he can complete the flight safely. Successful experience can lull a pilot into a false sense that every similar flight will have a (similar) successful outcome. However, changing conditions, especially unforecastable weather conditions can result in unpredictable (and bad) outcomes.
- **Attitude.** Once a pilot earns his pilot certificate(s) and starts to gain experience they become more likely to be involved in an accident, which may seem counterintuitive. But student pilots and low time non-instrument rated pilots are more closely supervised and less likely to take chances with weather. As a pilot gains experience, he is more likely to have the attitude of “I can do this!” for a variety of reasons. Over-confidence can be very dangerous. No pilot is immune to being involved in an accident. Confidence should be based on a pilot’s ability to demonstrate acceptable knowledge, risk management and flying skills. Developing and continually practicing good Aeronautical Decision Making (ADM) skills is fundamental to safety!

## Recommendations

- With the help of your CFI: Develop a training strategy and a plan that is tailored to your experience level to avoid flying VFR into IMC. Practice the 180-degree turn in simulated instrument conditions with your CFI. Discuss scenarios related to VFR into IMC with your CFI and how to avoid VFR into IMC.



- Establish personal minimums based on your personal experience level. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association’s Air Safety Institute (ASI) has developed a checklist which documents some of these required minimums as well as ASI’s recommendations. This checklist can be found at: [www.airsafetyinstitute.org](http://www.airsafetyinstitute.org). Once established stick to your personal minimums.
- Practice Recovery from Unusual Flight Attitudes

with your CFI until proficient to ACS standards

“

Over-confidence can be very dangerous. No pilot is immune to being involved in an accident.

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- When planning a flight into marginal VFR conditions, or IMC on an IFR flight plan, self-brief first and then follow up by speaking with an FAA certified weather specialist to obtain a briefing to confirm your analysis of the weather forecast and conditions for your flight. Then make your GO/NO GO decision.
- Complete the AOPA Air Safety Institute's VFR into IMC syllabus with your CFI
- Use the IMSAFE checklist to evaluate your fitness for flight prior to and during each flight.
- Pilots are encouraged to provide Pilot Reports (PIREPS) to the FAA to help other pilots understand actual weather conditions along the route of flight. See AIM section 7-1-18 through 7-1-29
- Know your airplane's systems and especially autopilot (if so equipped) prior to flight. Special attention should be given to instruments, avionics or navigation equipment with which you may not be familiar. This is especially important for Technically Advanced Aircraft (TAA) which may have sophisticated avionics (think "glass cockpit") and automated flight control systems. It often requires a significant amount of time and practice to master this technology and to become proficient in its operation. Sophisticated IFR capable airplanes are involved in more VFR into IMC accidents than simpler "VFR only" airplanes. This suggests that it is the limitations of the pilot and not the airplane that results in the VFR into IMC accident. Training to proficiency is the antidote to these accidents.
- If the weather briefer uses the term: "VFR not recommended" and you are not instrument rated, or if instrument rated and not current and proficient, do not attempt this flight at this time.
- Take advantage of technology including ADS-B and Flight Information Services (FIS-B) capabilities and other FAA and commercially available Inflight Weather Advisory Broadcast services when possible. See AIM section 7-1-9. But understand the limitations of in-flight weather services. There may be a significant delay (up to 20 minutes) in the time a weather report is generated and when it reaches your airplane. In-flight weather services should be used for strategic planning and not for tactical maneuvering around or through hazardous weather. It is very risky to attempt to maneuver around thunderstorm cells, especially at night, using only in-flight weather services.

Also do not rely on ATC to guide you around hazardous weather, as ATC radar is not optimized to allow the controller to accurately see hazardous weather on his radar scope. ATC radar cannot detect turbulence. Some ATC radar systems can determine the intensity of a precipitation area, but the specific character of that area (snow, rain, hail, VIRGA, etc.) cannot be determined. For this reason ATC refers to all weather areas displayed on ATC radar as "precipitation". Avoid any thunderstorm by at least 20 miles.



## References

- AOPA Air Safety Institute: [www.airsafetyinstitute.org](http://www.airsafetyinstitute.org) Various articles and videos
- AOPA Air Safety Institute VFR into IMC – Safety Syllabus
- Advisory Circular (AC) 90-92 Pilot’s Guide to Preflight Briefing
- Airman Certification Standards Private Pilot Airplane – FAA-S-ACS-6C
- Airman Certification Standards Instrument Rating Pilot Airplane – FAA-S-ACS-8C
- The Richard McSpadden Report
- FAA Safety: [www.faasafety.gov](http://www.faasafety.gov)
- Federal Aviation Regulations/Aeronautical Information Manual (FAR/AIM) 2026 edition (especially chapter 7 – Safety of Flight)



Paul



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## A Few Words About Safety

Denny Granquist

“

*“Exiting the runway where and when you want is your responsibility.”*

*“When you feel rushed, don't go faster, slow down.”*

”

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## Want to Build an Airplane?

By Howard Deevers

Not everyone wants to build their own airplane. But enough pilots DO want to build their own airplane that a whole culture exists around that idea. It is called the EAA; Experimental Aircraft Association. It is so large that they have their own convention each year in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, now named "AIRVENTURE." And it has grown to be the largest fly-in air show and convention in the country, with many visitors from other countries attending as well. If you are not in aviation at all, you may not even know that it exists.



I didn't know. When taking flying lessons, my instructor told me about Oshkosh. I had no idea that an annual event like that existed. My instructor said that when I get my Private Pilot License, he will take me with him to Oshkosh. My instructor, John, had been to Oshkosh several times already. He suggested we not go on opening day, but wait a few days and the 'early birds' would be leaving and you could get a good camping spot easier then. We packed the usual camping gear, and loaded it into his Cessna 172 and it was a wonderful trip, camping, and experience, plus great air shows.

Build your own airplane? What a ridiculous idea! But, wait; I built my own boat at age 20 from plans, not a kit. No one came around to see if I was doing it right or not, and no inspections were required before getting it into the Mississippi River. Airplanes are a bit different.

At Oshkosh, the 'home builder' is king. There will be more 'Experimental' aircraft to see and inspect than you ever knew about! After all, aviation, as we know it today, began with a couple of home builders experimenting with the idea of powered flight at Kitty Hawk North Carolina. They proved a concept, and we see the results flying over head of us every day now.



I have not built an airplane, and probably never will. But I do have a great admiration for those that do build their own airplanes. I have followed the progress of builders and the kits that they purchased, and how they did everything to assemble the final product; an airplane that you can actually fly. Many of the home-built airplanes I have seen at Oshkosh are more than just the required parts to make an airplane; they qualify as 'works of art.' I know how much time it takes to build a boat, but build an airplane? With all of the inspections, assembly and work it takes, it really is a wonder that anyone



would want to build their own airplane. But, then again, you have to look at how many there are flying and talk to the builders.

Not all builders do complete the projects. I have seen partially built kit planes that the builder just could not finish. There is a lot of help available at the EAA Chapters, and if you do want to build your own airplane I highly recommend joining a Chapter near you. The members learn from each other and the National EAA convention, now called "AIRVENTURE" held in Oshkosh each year shows just how important this idea of building your own air-

plane really is. If you really do want to build your own airplane, I will be there to cheer you on! But, still not likely to do the job myself.

If you are a home builder, or just bought your first airplane, join the ARIZONA PILOTS ASSOCIATION, and come to a safety seminar near you. They are free, and "Don't forget to 'bring your wingman.'

Howard



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# February 2026 Aviation Accident & Incident Summary

by Jim Timm

The following are the reports of aviation accidents that have occurred in Arizona from end of January through February.

The Accident Report will be limited because of the unexpected, and sudden passing of Craig Tompkins of the FAA SDL FSDO. As a result, there will not be a Pilot Deviation, nor NMAC Report.

We hope to use the following detailed accident information to develop safety programs, briefings, and posters/flyers that would help pilots learn from the mistakes being made by others and be able to take the necessary action to prevent them from having a similar occurrence.

The Accident/Incident report is a bit short and limited in content this time, and there were only five accidents reported. Unfortunately, we have started off the year rather poorly because since the first of the year we have had fourteen accidents reported and of these fourteen we have had a total of eight fatalities. This trend must not continue. All must be more careful in their flying, and I hope what's happening in Arizona isn't happening across the nation.

We're continuing with the expanded scope of this report by using information from the Aviation Safety Network (ASN), NTSB, and APA Members. Hopefully the information from these sources will suit our purpose of trying to get an idea of what is happening out there so we can help make flying safer.

In the meantime, here are the results from the above sources.

Date: February 4, 2026  
Source: ASN  
Location: Prescott Airport (PRC)  
Type: Socata TB21 Trinidad TC  
Injuries: 1 Fatality  
No Pilot Information

## **CRASHED ON FINAL APPROACH**

The aircraft departed Santa Ana-John Wayne International Airport bound for Prescott Airport, and it impacted open desert terrain while on approach to land about 2.5 miles northeast of Prescott Regional Airport (PRC). The aircraft was destroyed in the accident.

Date: February 4, 2026  
Source: ASN, FAA, NTSB  
Location: Near Flagstaff Airport  
Type: Bell 407 DPS Helicopter  
Injuries: 2 Fatalities  
No Pilot Information

## **LOSS OF CONTROL**

The Bell 407 helicopter departed from Kingman and was destroyed when it impacted terrain in Flagstaff. The pilot and a paramedic on board sustained fatal injuries.

Multiple law enforcement departments were on the scene of an active shooter, and AZ DPS troopers on the scene requested an AZ DPS Air Unit. The DPS helicopter crashed west of the shooting situation shortly after being called. ADS-B data indicated the helicopter entered a rapid climb towards the end of the flight, with ground speeds reported as low as 4 knots. A witness video showed the helicopter in an out-of-control spin.

Date: February 6, 2026  
Source: ASN, FAA, NTSB  
Location: Near Gila Bend  
Type: Pelegrin Tarragon (Experimental Aircraft)  
Injuries: 1 Fatality, 1 Serious Injury  
No Pilot Information

## **IN FLIGHT LOSS OF CONTROL**

The Pelegrin Tarragon, an experiment aircraft, departed Stellar Air Park (P19) in Chandler, and crashed when it experienced an engine failure east of Gila Bend. The aircraft was destroyed in the accident.

Date: February 6, 2026  
Source: ASN  
Location: Mesa Falcon Field (FFZ)  
Type: Cessna 185D Skywagon  
Injuries: 1 Uninjured  
No Pilot Information

### EMERGENCY LANDING

The airplane declared an emergency immediate-

ly after a takeoff from the runway and made an emergency landing in a field inside the airport property.

Date: February 26, 2026  
Source: ASN  
Location: Glendale Municipal Airport (GEU)  
Type: Remos GX  
Injuries: 1 Uninjured  
No Pilot Information

### HARD LANDING

A Remos aircraft made a hard landing at Glendale Airport incurring a prop strike.



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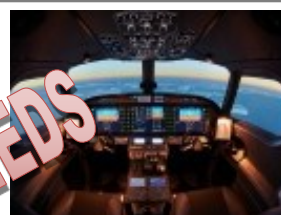
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Mgr: Phil DiBartola 928-428-6811			
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<b>Indian Hills Airpark</b>	Salome	75	
Mgr: Gerry Breeyear (928) 916-0608			
<b>La Cholla Airpark</b>	Oro Valley	122	
Mgr: Larry Newman (520) 297-8096			
<b>Mogollon Airpark</b>	Overgaard	60	
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<b>Skyranch at Carefree</b>	Carefree	20	<b>Erik McCormick</b> - Choice One Properties 480 888 6380 <a href="mailto:Erik@Pilotexpeditions.com">Erik@Pilotexpeditions.com</a>
Mgr: Tommy Thomason (480) 488-3571			
<b>Stellar Air Park</b>	Chandler	95/105	<b>Erik McCormick</b> - Choice One Properties 480 888 6380 <a href="mailto:Erik@Pilotexpeditions.com">Erik@Pilotexpeditions.com</a>
Mgr: SRUA, Inc. (480) 295-2683			
<b>Sun Valley Airpark</b>	Fort Mohave	55/107	
MSVPOA Office (928) 768-9192			
<b>Thunder Ridge Airpark</b>	Morristown	9/14 (on 160 acres)	<b>Cindy Esterly</b> - Prestige Realty 623 217 7772 <a href="mailto:cindyMarketsAZ@gmail.com">cindyMarketsAZ@gmail.com</a>
John Anderson janderson72j@gmail.com			
<b>Triangle Airpark</b>	White Hills	115 acres	
Mgr: Walt Stout (702) 202-9851			
<b>Twin Hawks</b>	Marana	2/40 (4 acre lots) on 155 acres	
Mgr: Tim Blowers (520) 349-7677			
<b>Western Sky</b>	Salome	all 200 acres for sale	
Mgr: Bill McDonald (602) 809-4008			
<b>Whetstone Airpark</b>	Whetstone	5 / 12	
Mgr: Brian Ulmer (520) 456-0483			

## APA Website

Please visit our website for the latest information.

[www.azpilots.org](http://www.azpilots.org) A great resource for APA's work in the state, archived newsletters, current events, APA's continuous work with legislators, a calendar of activities, and more.

**APA is a volunteer run organization.** It survives on membership dues and sponsor revenue. Stefanie Spencer manages the website on a continuous basis.

Email Stefanie at:

[Webmaster@AZPilots.org](mailto:Webmaster@AZPilots.org)

## Newsletter Contributors

### Article Deadlines:

20<sup>th</sup> Editor reminds the Team to submit articles

25<sup>th</sup> Authors submit articles and advertisements

Contact the newsletter editor, Cathy Paradee:

[newsletter@AZPilots.org](mailto:newsletter@AZPilots.org)

For anyone wanting to contribute to this newsletter please submit your writing in an email file along with photos and captions (separate files). The APA would like to publish information about what's happening in your area of Arizona. Subject matter could range from regulatory issues to new places to eat (or old places) to airport management to safety. Of course, the APA would like to know about any political activities that could potentially compromise Arizona's pilots or its airports.



Stefanie Spencer— Webmaster



*New pilots welcomed!*



*Writers welcomed!*



## APA Clothing

The online store is currently on the [Square Market, click here.](#)

## Advertisements

As a benefit to current members, you may advertise aviation related items in the APA Newsletter and online. Classified ads for items that you own are completely free, just send those requests to our webmaster [Stefanie](#). Photographic ads range from business card size to full page. Please contact our sponsorship and advertising chairman [Rick](#) for more information on advertising.

## APA Membership

If you are not a member of APA you are encouraged to join and help us keep General Aviation available, safe and fun for all. Your support is very much appreciated. Please visit our website for details and where you can [join APA](#). If you have questions, please go to our website's contacts web page where you can send an email, see our mailing address or contact us by telephone. You can also help APA by purchasing some of our logo items, Caps & T-Shirts.

## Volunteer 501 (c) (3) Organization

The Arizona Pilots Association (APA) is an all volunteer 501 (c) (3) organization. The articles you find in our newsletter are written by volunteers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or position of the APA, nor have they been vetted for technical accuracy.

