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# Yuba County Airport

## Summary:

The 2012-2013 Yuba County Grand Jury conducted an investigation of the Yuba County Airport but did not file a report. The 2013-2014 Grand Jury decided to conduct an investigation in response to pilots' complaints regarding airport operations and the Grand Jury investigation from last year. The Grand Jury identified three areas that need improvement at the Yuba County Airport. These are safety, security, and maintenance.

## Introduction and Background:

The 2013-2014 Grand Jury decided to investigate the Yuba County Airport as a result of a pilot's complaint regarding airport operations and the Grand Jury investigation from last year. The Grand Jury conducted a site visit, interviews, and document reviews. Airport safety, security, and maintenance were areas of concern identified by the Grand Jury during the investigation.

## Methodology and Approach:

Documents:

- FAA Regulations, Part 103 concerning ultra-lights:  
<http://www.ultralighthomepage.com/FAR.part103.html>
- Web Site: [www.yubacoairport.com](http://www.yubacoairport.com)
- Title II: <http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/BOS/documents/ordinance/titleII.pdf>
- Budget information: <http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/CAO/Budget/13-14/Proposed/05%20Administrative%20Services%20Final.pdf>
- Budget information: <http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/CAO/Budget/08-09/proposed/4%20-%20Administrative%20Services.pdf>
- Title XII – Zoning:  
<http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/BOS/documents/ordinance/Title%20XII.pdf>
- Job Title, Airport Manager, 1996
- County of Yuba Ordinance Chapter 2.110 Airport Rules and Regulations Dated 16 December 2008

**Site visit:** A site visit to the Yuba County Airport was conducted the Grand Jury.

**Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with the Yuba County Airport Manager, the Yuba County Director of Administrative Services Purchasing Agent, Yuba County Supervisor Board Chairman, hangar renters, and pilots.

**Discussion and Narrative:**

During the Grand Jury visit, the Airport Manager reported that a local farmer has contracted with the Yuba County Airport to provide the equipment and labor to cut a perimeter fire break around the airport in exchange for agricultural use of some of the airport land.

The Airport Manager reported to the Grand Jury that there is no formal accident response plan or planned airport related exercises with local emergency responders. No combined airport and local emergency responders or exercises are regularly conducted. Individuals report all emergencies or accidents by calling 911.

***Summary: There is no formal accident response plan or planned airport related exercises with local emergency responders. No combined airport and local emergency responders or exercises are regularly conducted.***



**Figure 1.** A sign located at Yuba County Airport stating that ultra-light vehicle operations are prohibited at Yuba County Airport unless authorized by the Airport Manager.

Pilots' complaints regarding airport operations contend that the current location being used by the ultra-lights is not conducive to safe operations with other aircraft at the airport. The Airport Manager verbally approved the current operating location (Figure 1).

It was reported to the Grand Jury that ultra-light operations increases risk at the airport and endangers other aircraft operations (Figure 1). The ultra-lights' small size, slow speed, lack of radio communications, and no lighting make them extremely difficult to see (Figure 2). Yuba County has no written agreement, procedures, or liability insurance coverage agreements with these ultra-light users.

Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), Part 103 concern the operation of ultra-lights. Currently ultra-light users are not required to be Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) licensed pilots. However, they must comply with all aspects of this regulation. The Grand Jury found that there is no evidence the Airport Manager requires ultra-light operations at Yuba County Airport to comply with all aspects of this regulation, and all other FAA airspace regulations.



**Figure 2.** *An ultra-light aircraft flies at the Yuba County Airport.*

***Summary: Ultra-light operations increase the risk at the airport and endanger other aircraft operation.***

Pilots' complaints to the Grand Jury contend that the main security gate at the airport is sometimes left open for long periods of time for unknown reasons. This main security gate is used for access to flight line and hangars, was found open on the day the Grand Jury visited the airport (Figure 3). The northern security gate is almost always closed and is used by airport personnel and emergency responders. The Grand Jury also found that the airport is not completely fenced and lacks complete perimeter security.

The Grand Jury found section 2.110.240, Security Requirements (County of Yuba Ordinance Chapter 2.110 Airport Rules and Regulations Dated 16 December 2008) does not state clearly the specific requirements of security gate operations and requirements for perimeter fencing.



**Figure 3.** *This is the main gate used for access to flight line and hangars. This gate was found open on the day the Grand Jury visited the airport.*

***Summary: The Grand Jury found the Airport Rules and Regulations do not state clearly the specific requirements of security gate operations and requirements for perimeter fencing.***

The Airport Manager reported to the Grand Jury that there is no daily log of inspections (Monday-Friday) of all the runways or taxiways for Foreign Object Debris (FOD), windsocks, or lighting, or airport general conditions.

Below is the list of what was recently provided to the Grand Jury that the administrative services maintenance personnel checks on their morning rounds each morning at the Yuba County Airport:

*Drive main access road, back street, and parking lots.*

- *Remove any debris.*
- *Report irrigation problems.*
- *Report any vandalism.*

*Drive hangar areas.*

- *Remove any debris.*

- *Note and report visible hangar damage.*
- *Report any suspicious spills or run-off.*
- *Report any vandalism.*

*Drive runways and taxi areas.*

- *Inspect for cracks, debris, weeds.*

*Test and verify runway lights will come on when cued.*

- *Check for burnt out lights, repair accordingly.*

*Confirm that both vehicular security access gates are in proper working order.*

The Grand Jury found that there are no inspections planned on the weekends and holidays, when usage increases. Pilots and users of the airport are the main individuals reporting problems or conditions that are safety related. The Grand Jury finds there is no runway or taxiway sweeping schedule at the airport, other than prior to special events. No proper sweeping equipment is available to the airport, other than rental equipment obtained through Yuba County Public Works.

***Summary: There is no runway or taxiway sweeping schedule at the airport.***

Pilots and users of the airport reported to the Grand Jury that the airport is seriously lacking in airport building and hangar maintenance. The Grand Jury also observed that several buildings and hangars are lacking in airport building and hangar maintenance. Virtually all maintenance of airport buildings and hangars occurs when renters report problems to the Airport Manager. Airport buildings and hangars were found to be showing signs of wear, exposed wood, and leaking roofs. These buildings badly need paint and maintenance (Figure 4). As a result of these poor conditions, aircraft and equipment are getting wet and becoming damaged. There are no scheduled inspections of the rental hangars or facilities. Operation of hangar doors, leaking roofs, and electrical wiring are some reported complaints.



**Figure 4.** *This airport building is in need of paint and maintenance. Airport buildings do not have scheduled maintenance and are now showing signs of wear. The exposed wood and leaking roofs are beginning to require funding and maintenance. Aircraft and equipment are reportedly getting wet in these facilities because of leaking roofs.*

***Summary: The airport is lacking in building and hangar maintenance.***

The Grand Jury observed that airport equipment is being stored out in the weather next to a hangar (Figure 5). There are many privately owned vehicles, trailers, and pieces of equipment (Figure 6) that are stored near hangars without fees assessed or collected. Individuals are storing vehicles and trailers around airport hangars and buildings for long periods of time. Personal recreational trailers (Figure 6 and 7) are also stored on airport property and could be used as living quarters.



**Figure 5.** *This equipment is stored out in the weather next to a hangar that needs serious maintenance along with paint.*



**Figure 6.** *Vehicles and trailers stored around airport hangars and buildings for long periods of time.*

**Summary:** *Individuals are allowed to store vehicles and trailers around airport hangars and buildings for long periods of time.*



**Figure 7.** *Personal recreational trailers are also stored on airport property and could be used as living quarters.*

The Grand Jury found that the Airport Manager Job Description (Dated 1996) is in need of updating to reflect the current requirements of the Airport Manager. Since approximately 1979, the Airport Manager was intended to divide 50% of the time between the airport and Enterprise Zone. However, often this individual devoted much more than half time to the Enterprise Zone. Effective January 2014, the Airport Manager is no longer responsible for the Enterprise Zone and should be able to focus exclusively on airport management. The Grand Jury also found that the airport does not have an oversight committee, or aviation group, that recommends improvements to the airport.

***Summary: The Airport Manager Job Description is in need of updating.***

The Airport Manager stated that the airport does not have a documented complaint process and that all complaints are handled verbally by the Airport Manager. Two airport employees (a secretary and a maintenance position) have retired and there are no plans to replace them. The Airport Manager is the only airport employee and is responsible for the 24 hour operation of the airport.

***Summary: The airport lacks a well-documented complaint process. There are no plans to replace the two retired airport employees.***

The Grand Jury found that the Golden West Air Show has poor public attendance, and is not properly advertised in the local media. No local news channels were used to advertise the air show. The Golden West Air Show is a financial loss to Yuba County.

The Grand Jury also found that the airport improvements have been funded by various grants, federal funds and not primarily by county funds.

### **Findings:**

The Grand Jury finds that:

- F1. The Yuba County Airport has contracted with a local farmer to provide the equipment and labor to cut a perimeter fire break around the airport in exchange for agricultural use of some of the land.
- F2. There is no formal accident response plan or planned airport related exercises with local emergency responders.
- F3. Ultra-light operations increase the safety risk at the airport and endanger other aircraft operations.
- F4. The Airport Manager verbally approved the current ultra-light operating location.
- F5. The Grand Jury found section 2.110.240, Security Requirements (County of Yuba Ordinance Chapter 2.110 Airport Rules and Regulations, dated 16 December 2008) does not state clearly the specific requirements for security gate operations or requirements for perimeter fencing.
- F6. There is no daily log of inspections of all runways or taxiways for Foreign Object Debris (FOD), or lighting, windsocks, and airport general conditions.

- F7. There is no runway or taxiway sweeping schedule at the airport other than prior to special events. No proper sweeping equipment is available to the airport other than rental through Yuba County Public Works.
- F8. The airport is seriously lacking in airport building and hangar maintenance.
- F9. There are many privately owned vehicles, trailers, and equipment that are stored near hangars without fees assessed or collected.
- F10. The Airport Manager Job Description is in need of updating to reflect the current responsibilities.
- F11. The airport does not have an oversight committee, or aviation group, that recommends improvements to the airport.
- F12. The airport lacks a well-documented complaint process. Currently, complaints are handled verbally by the Airport Manager.
- F13. Two airport employees have retired and there are no plans to replace them. The Airport Manager is the only airport employee and is responsible for the 24 hour operation of the airport.
- F14. There are no scheduled inspections of the rental hangars or facilities.
- F15. The Golden West Air Show has poor public attendance, is a loss to the county, and is not properly advertised in the local area. No local news media were used to advertise the air show.
- F16. The airport funding for improvements has been accomplished by Grants, federal funding, and very little by county funds.

### **Recommendations:**

The Grand Jury recommends:

- R1. The Airport Manager establishes an accident response plan and schedule regular airport related exercises with the local emergency service responders.
- R2. The Airport Manager:
  - Provide written authorization for ultra-light operations.
  - Establish written procedures for safe operations, to include established ultra-light traffic patterns and altitudes.

- Is encouraged to seek the assistance of knowledgeable local pilots at Yuba County Airport in establishing the new procedures.
  - Inform all local and transient pilots of ultra-light operations and procedures at Yuba County Airport.
  - Require all ultra-light users comply with all aspects of Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), Part 103 concerning the operation of ultra-lights.
  - Require Ultra-light operations at Yuba County Airport comply with all aspects of this regulation, and all other FAA airspace regulations.
- R3. Yuba County establishes liability insurance coverage agreements with these ultra-light users.
- R4. The ultra-lights be moved to the west side of runway 14/32 where safe operations with other aircraft at the airport would be improved. If this is not feasible, strong consideration be given to terminating ultra-light operations at Yuba County Airport.
- R5. The Airport Manager update section 2.110.240, Security Requirements to include specific requirements for security gate operations and requirements for perimeter fencing.
- R6. The Airport Manager and Administrative Services Director:
- Develop and use a written daily inspection checklist for all runways and taxiways for FOD, lighting, windsocks, or airport general condition.
  - Conduct inspections on the weekends and holidays when increased usage occurs to ensure safe aircraft operations.
  - Develop and use a sweeping schedule for all runways and taxiways at the airport.
- R7. The Airport Manager develop an annual preventative maintenance schedule for all airport hangars and buildings.
- R8. The Airport Manager removes unauthorized privately owned vehicles, trailers, and equipment that are stored on county property, and that a written log of authorizations and fees collected be maintained for authorized privately owned vehicles, trailers, and equipment stored on airport property.

- R9. The Administrative Services Director revise and update the Airport Manager Job Description to reflect current duties and responsibilities.
- R10. Establish an oversight committee or aviation group that recommends improvements to the airport.
- R11. The Airport Manager establish a written complaint process that includes a record of all complaints, and the resolutions.
- R12. The Airport Manager fill the positions vacated by the two employees who retired, in order to maintain airport operations.
- R13. The Golden West Air Show improve publicity and marketing.
- R14. Airport funding for improvements be obtained through a combination of grants, federal, state and county funds.

**Commendations:**

- C1. The Grand Jury commends the Airport Manager for contracting a local farmer to provide the equipment and labor to cut a perimeter fire break around the airport in exchange for agricultural use of some of the airport land.

**Request for Responses:**

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

- Yuba County Airport Manager
- Yuba County Administrative Services Director
- Yuba County Supervisors

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted in accordance with Penal Code 933(c) and subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

