



Memorandum of Support Connecticut House Bill 5392

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest aviation organization, representing the general aviation interests of nearly 330,000 pilots and aircraft owners across the country, including more than 3,000 of our members in Connecticut. On behalf of these members, **AOPA Supports House Bill 5392, Meteorological Tower Markings at Airports.**

The proliferation of Meteorological Evaluation Towers (MET) across the country poses a significant safety hazard to many types of aeronautical operations. These towers are very difficult to see and in certain weather conditions (e.g., a background of snow cover or light-colored surface), are virtually invisible to the naked-eye. Those operations that are at greatest risk of collision with MET towers include agricultural, law enforcement, emergency services, wildlife management, and flight training.

On June 24, 2011, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) directly addressed concerns relating to the hazards of MET towers with the issuance of a policy statement. In that statement, (76 Federal Register 36983, FR Doc No: 2011-15746), the FAA *“recommends the voluntary marking of METs less than 200 feet AGL in accordance with the marking guidance in this document and Advisory Circular 70/7460-1, Obstruction Marking and Lighting.”* Together, these documents specifically set forth recommendations for the use of paint, spherical balls and sleeves to make MET towers more visible to low altitude aviation operations.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has issued two Safety Alerts to date on this topic (SAO-16 and SA-035) and published a Safety Recommendation to all Governors on May 15, 2013 (A-13-21) to encourage states to mitigate risks to low-altitude aviation operations by requiring that MET towers be marked and registered in a directory. Since that time, more than a dozen states have passed laws enacting rules and regulations for the conspicuous marking of these near invisible killers.

The combined action by the FAA and NTSB led many prominent legal minds and other aviation experts to suggest there was now an establish standard of care that would govern any liability issues that might arise in-connection with accidents involving MET towers. This claim was later substantiated when a California family was awarded \$6.7 million for the wrongful death of their family member, a highly respected agricultural pilot with 26,000 accident free hours who crashed his Rockwell S-2R into a MET tower in 2011.

For these reasons AOPA supports House Bill 5392 and requirements for MET towers to be marked in accordance with established industry standards. Please contact AOPA Eastern Region staff at sean.collins@aopa.org or by phone at (301)695-2090.