



March 24th, 2020

AOPA Airport Support Network / COVID-19 and Airport Access Update

It is the mission of AOPA's Airport Support Network to promote, protect, and defend America's airports. As we navigate this public health crisis, ASN volunteers have done an exceptional job communicating the status of their airports to our Regional Managers. Please consider this update and guidance as you communicate with your airport's leadership during this time.

Over the last few days, AOPA has received reports of public use airports across the country taking steps to combat the threat of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Local governments, including airport sponsors, are working hard to comply with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and with state and local directives that are quickly evolving during this crisis. In some cases, airport staff has been limited to "essential" personnel, and full service fueling has been discontinued. In rare instances, airports have closed to all traffic except medical evacuation missions or have issued NOTAMS closing runways in efforts to thwart the spread of the virus. So far, this has occurred at non-federally funded airports. The FAA released a [policy memo](#) on March 16th reaffirming that any closure of a federally funded and grant obligated public use airport is NOT authorized unless FAA approval is granted under Grant Assurance 19 and 49 U.S.C. 47107(a)(8.). Grant Assurance 19 states that airport sponsors will not cause or permit any activity or action that would interfere with its use as an airport. Check NOTAMS and call ahead for up to date information.

AOPA understands that some day to day airport services may be interrupted, projects put on hold, commission meetings postponed, or some aviation groups may be asked to cancel or postpone activities. AOPA does not view these issues as grant assurance violations – and realizes that these are unprecedented times as public health is the top priority. Congregating in lobbies, hangars, or other public spaces is discouraged. Some airports have mandated that rental aircraft be taken off-line, and flying clubs cease operations as these aircraft are shared by many individuals. Many airports, flight schools and flying clubs are open for business but are exercising enhanced precautionary measures to ensure the safety of pilots and instructors. AOPA recommends following all guidance provided by the CDC and state and local officials.

AOPA is strongly reminding state leaders that the robust public airport system is vital in times of crisis and disaster relief and is a critical component of our nations response to this challenge. Community airports are uniquely positioned to play a key role if medical services or supplies are required to be delivered via general aviation. The general and business aviation industry is comprised of a diverse fleet, capable of rapidly responding to needs in every part of the country and transporting time sensitive supplies, medical and testing equipment, organs for transplants, and key personnel and patients to over 5,000 general aviation airports. Airports in small and rural communities are often the economic engines and lifelines for many towns and cities across

the nation. As an ASN Volunteer, please help spread that message and educate local leaders and public health officials on the value of their airport.

AOPAs advocacy team is actively working to preserve general aviation during this critical time. AOPA and six other aviation groups are [urging Congress to support needed funding](#) for airports across the country while ensuring that small and general aviation airports also receive a portion of any funds made available to help cope with the coronavirus pandemic. [In a letter to the FAA Administrator](#), AOPA also urged a flexible approach that allows extensions and relief from regulatory time restrictions for the duration of the crisis. ASN Volunteers can stay up to date on the latest COVID-19 impacts to General Aviation at [this AOPA web page](#) which is updated daily.

We value your important role to promote, protect, and defend America's airports. Please keep your AOPA Regional Manager informed if access to your airport is threatened during this COVID-19 crisis. You can reach Sean Collins at sean.collins@aopa.org. Additionally, AOPAs offices are "virtually" open and ready to support our members needs. You can reach our Pilot Information Center or Member Services 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern, Monday through Friday at 1.800.U.S.A.AOPA (1.800.872.2672) or 301.695.2000.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Ginter".

Mike Ginter
V.P. Airports and State Advocacy