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September 18, 2014

Mr. Randall S. Fiertz  
Director, Office of Airport Compliance and Management Analysis  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Re: Docket Number FAA-2014-0463 Policy on the Non-aeronautical Use of Airport Hangars

Dear Mr. Fiertz

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), a not-for-profit membership organization, is the world's largest aviation organization, representing the general aviation interests of pilots and aircraft owners nationwide. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a national transportation system.

#### **General comments**

AOPA provides the following comments to the proposed statement of policy on the non-aeronautical use of airport hangars for the FAA's consideration. In general, we appreciate the efforts of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Office of Airport Compliance to construct a policy statement that allows local flexibility while providing the overarching national-level guidance necessary to provide some uniformity of standards across the entire system of federally funded airports. Aircraft hangars are an indispensable part of our airports and national airspace system, providing a place of refuge and respite for both pilot and aircraft. Hangar tenants, whether lessees or owners, take great pride in their hangar and seek to make it a comfortable and inviting place to shelter their aircraft, maintain and repair it, and, at a growing number of airports, actually construct an aircraft from "crate to completion."

AOPA shares the view that a hangar on a federally funded airport is for aeronautical use, and we concur that a hangar at an obligated airport used exclusively for non-aeronautical purposes without the prior approval of the FAA is not a proper use of airport land designated for aeronautical use. To that end, AOPA believes that every hangar that has an aircraft based in it that is airworthy, or in the process of becoming airworthy (under active construction, repair, or renovation) is in aeronautical use.

#### **Non-aeronautical uses in privately owned hangars**

The Association knows that a growing number of hangars at airports are privately owned and built on a land lease from the airport. With airport sponsors doing their best to maintain balance sheets that allow for participation in the FAA's Airport Improvement Program through providing matching funds for FAA grants, revenue-generating projects that are primarily funded by the airport have a lower priority than projects funded with non-airport revenue sources. Hangars fall in that category. The sponsor thus looks to private individuals and companies to build hangars for their own use.

Owners of privately built hangars view them as an extension of their homes, and use them as gathering places or for storage of items that may or may not be aeronautical in nature, or items that support an

aeronautical activity, maintenance, or aircraft building activities. They view the hangar as their private property to conduct whatever activities they desire within the confines of a structure they built with their own resources, on a lease lasting some years. They reasonably object to having activities conducted in their own property too closely regulated or scrutinized, so long as it meets the standard for aeronautical use.

AOPA agrees with these hangar owners. If private hangar owners have an aircraft in their hangar, the FAA and airport sponsors should afford a wider degree of latitude in use, consistent with their lease, airport minimum standards for commercial aeronautical activities and local building codes. The primary use of the hangar must be aeronautical in nature and the non-aeronautical uses should not hinder that.

Hangars owned and leased to tenants by the airport sponsor or a fixed base operator can be subject to greater scrutiny than privately owned hangars. Nonetheless, non-aeronautical uses in these hangars should be permissible under FAA and airport sponsor policies so long as they do not interfere with the aeronautical use of the hangar, impede access to the aircraft or other aeronautical contents of the hangar, or displace the aeronautical contents of the hangars, and occupies an insignificant amount of space within the hangar.

#### **Amateur aircraft construction**

Building an aircraft, next to actual flight, is possibly the quintessential aeronautical experience. Many AOPA members displayed disbelief that the FAA takes the position that building an aircraft is not an aeronautical use. That the FAA has actually softened their stance in this draft policy to recognize final assembly of an aircraft in a hangar as an aeronautical use is not enough in their view, or in ours. From the time the first component is laid out and fastened to another, until the aircraft rolls out the door of the hangar ready for its first flight, the ability of the builder to consult with and use the expertise of other airmen and mechanics at the airport to assist in the construction is a key benefit of on-airport construction. An aircraft construction project can become a focal point of an airport community and often serves to strengthen the bonds among tenants, introduce new enthusiasts to general aviation and build community support for the airport.

AOPA supports the amateur-built aircraft community and strongly encourages the FAA to revise their position on this and designate aircraft construction as an aeronautical activity. AOPA recognizes that airport sponsors still have a fiduciary duty to ensure the safety of others within the hangar areas at their airports as well as meeting the requirements of other public agencies and offices with jurisdiction over safety and building codes. For that reason, AOPA encourages airport sponsors to evaluate thoroughly the conditions at their airports with the intent of allowing construction of amateur-built aircraft in their hangars.

#### **Additional Aeronautical Activities Not Addressed in the Draft Policy**

Many other legitimate aeronautical activities can be found on airports, and base their activities there. It is likely that the equipment and preparation for these activities can be found in hangars, and should be considered aeronautical uses.

### **Skydiving**

The FAA considers Skydiving an aeronautical use and an obligated airport must accommodate it. There are skydiving clubs and activities using hangars that may not have an aircraft stored in them, but that use should be considered aeronautical in nature. Parachute riggers pack and inspect parachutes in hangars. Parachutes and related equipment are stored in hangars. Special apparatus used in instructing skydivers in basic, advanced and emergency techniques are used and stored in hangars. AOPA requests that skydiving uses of hangars fall under the aeronautical use of a hangar with or without an aircraft stored in the hangar.

### **Gliders**

From time to time soaring enthusiasts have occasion to store their gliders, assembled or disassembled, in hangars on an airport. Since gliders are aircraft it should go without saying that they are an aeronautical use of a hangar. The FAA should state that the storage of gliders in a hangar is an aeronautical use.

### **Seaplanes/Skiplanes**

Some airplanes are outfitted with floats or skis that are removable. If these aircraft are stored in a hangar, it makes sense to store the floats, skis, and other landing gear (such displaced wheels) in the hangar as well. The FAA should consider storage of seasonal or special use landing gear an aeronautical use in hangars.

### **Balloons**

Balloon envelopes, baskets and associated equipment should be considered aeronautical uses for the purposes of this policy and be allowed in hangars.

AOPA is pleased to offer these comments for your consideration. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact our staff at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James Coon".

James Coon  
Senior Vice President  
Government Affairs & Advocacy