

## NAPLES: PROVIDING A MODEL FOR FLYING SAFELY AND QUIETLY

### Airport a Good Neighbor and Boon to Local Economy

Despite physical limitations and a noise-sensitive location, Naples Municipal Airport has been doing what it can to enhance safety and provide a variety of aviation services to both its based and transient general aviation operators. While noise will always be a sensitive issue in the region, airport users have demonstrated a willingness to reduce operations during a voluntary curfew to be a good neighbor to the local community.







Just a short distance from the beaches and condominiums of the southwest Florida communities of Naples, Marco Island and Bonita Beach lies the 732-acre Naples Municipal Airport (APF), a well-known destination to many in business aviation.

Calling itself “The Best Little Airport in the Country,” Naples Municipal Airport serves the needs of general aviation (GA) in southwest Florida, and pumps \$273 million into the local economy, both directly and indirectly.

With just under 400 based aircraft and about 85,000 aircraft operations annually, the airport is focused on its general aviation customers. Although Naples had a number of commercial carriers serving the airport from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s, APF today has almost no airline service. Military helicopters, the Coast Guard, Civil Air Patrol, air medical and mosquito control flights and the Collier County Sheriff’s Aviation Unit also operate from the airport.

Recent discussions between the airport authority and JetBlue Airways - the airline had indicated interest in starting up Embraer ERJ-190 jet service to APF - came to naught, most probably a casualty of local community opposition (noise is the primary complaint), inadequate terminal facilities, the airport’s unique 75,000-pound weight limit and a maximum landing distance available of 5,000 feet (Runway 5/23).

### PROMOTING QUIET FLYING

Surrounded by residential developments and shopping districts, and restricted in its ability to grow because of bordering Naples Bay and protected wetlands, Naples Airport has long been sensitive to minimizing noise for its neighbors. APF gained notoriety in the aviation community years ago by being the first airport to ban Stage 1 and 2 jets under 75,000 pounds, and to limit all aircraft operating

at the airport to a maximum gross weight dual-gear of 75,000 pounds (exceptions are made for public agency aircraft and in emergencies, such as the National Guard C-130 aircraft that used the facility in the aftermath of Hurricane Wilma).

The airport also has a voluntary 10 p.m. until 7 a.m. curfew. Operations other than emergency medical services and mosquito control are strongly discouraged, and according to airport officials, nearly 98 percent of all operations comply with the curfew.

“Noise will always be a sensitive issue in Naples,” said Ted Soliday, executive director of the Naples Airport Authority. “We congratulate our airport users, who have demonstrated a willingness to reduce operations during the curfew. These are running at less than 2 percent of all operations.”

Soliday noted that the airport has been working with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on developing standard instrument departure and standard terminal arrival procedures for APF. These should take effect later this year and will help with quieter, constant-descent approaches, as well as noise-sensitive departures. In addition to the voluntary curfew, the airport uses preferential runways during calm conditions, as well as preferred flight tracks, to reduce noise, meets regularly with local residents and communicates with pilots and aircraft owners regarding noise abatement. Residents are encouraged to call a noise-abatement hotline to report excessive noise.

### PROVIDING NEEDED SERVICES

Naples Airport has been doing what it can, despite its physical limitations and noise-sensitive location, to accommodate larger aircraft, enhance safety and provide a variety of aviation services to both based aircraft, as well as the large amount of transient operations.

According to Sheila Dugan, deputy executive director of the airport authority, in the past several years an 800-foot displaced threshold was added to the end of Runway 23, as well as a 510-foot displaced threshold to the end of Runway 5. These projects enable aircraft to gain additional altitude before leaving the airport, as both Runway 5 and 23 now have a 5,800-foot takeoff distance available (landing distance available is still 5,000 feet).

“This helps improve safety as well as reduces noise,” said Dugan.

The airport authority sells fuel at competitive prices, attracting aircraft from around the region, and revenue from fuel sales was used to build a new U.S. Customs and Border Protection federal inspection station on the airport.



Photos courtesy of Naples Municipal Airport

The facility has been open for several years and operates from 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week.

Both Soliday and Dugan are proud of the fact that the airport is entirely self-supporting, a combination of revenue from aviation fuel sales and other fees. The crowded ramps, hangars and tiedowns over the winter holidays are testament to the popularity of APF in the colder months and the importance of the airport to the local economy.

In 2012, Naples Municipal Airport was named the 2012 General Aviation Airport of the Year by the Florida Department of Transportation, and the airport has received many other accolades from the aviation community, the FAA and the Government Finance Officers Association.

"We are a good business and have been recognized as such," said Soliday.

### APF A 'GEM' FOR USERS

Jeff Gilley, NBAA's director of airports & ground infrastructure, has monitored the unusual aspects of operating at APF for years to ensure access for NBAA Members and others in business aviation.

According to Gilley, the advent of quieter engines has made the ban on Stage 1 and 2 aircraft almost a non-issue, and he noted that even larger jets such as the Bombardier BD-700 Global Express and Gulfstream G-V, G-550 and 650s can access APF by taking off and landing within the 75,000-pound weight limit (both Gulfstream and Bombardier offer a flight manual supplement for these kind of operations).

For based operators of these aircraft - and there are a handful year-round, with more "in season" - the weight limit might mean an additional fuel stop depending on the destination, but most don't seem to mind. "We make it work," said Matt Simpson, chief pilot for Flight Management Services, Inc.

Simpson, who manages a Global 5000 for an individual owner, often has to "hop up" to Ft. Myers International

(RSW) to fuel up, but the owner "is fine with that," said Simpson.

"We like the Naples airport - it's a gem," said Simpson. "The airport adds value to those who own property in the area, but many people don't realize how much the community benefits from it."

Scott Cameron has been based at APF since 1976. The president of Cameron Real Estate Services and owner of a Piper PA-34 Seneca, Cameron was also the founder of Friends of the [Naples] Airport back in 1999.

"The idea was to counter the often inaccurate, incomplete news coverage of the airport," said Cameron. "Over the years, we've been working to educate the public about the benefits of Naples Airport, including the economic benefits, EMS and fire-control activities, and so forth."

Friends of the Airport produced a professional video about APF that it has placed on local TV channels and uses to show civic organizations. The group also created an advertising campaign promoting the airport that, according to Cameron, "was very effective."

"The number one goal is a safe, friendly, and productive airport," said Cameron. "The airport has a fabulous staff, and they do a lot to make users and visitors feel appreciated."

The Naples area of Florida is beloved by both residents and visitors alike. Between the efforts of the airport authority, based operators, businesses and pilots and the continued scrutiny and monitoring by NBAA and other aviation interests, Naples Municipal Airport should continue to provide business aviation access to this part of southwest Florida for the foreseeable future.



## **ABOUT NBAA**

Founded in 1947, the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) is the leading organization for companies that rely on general aviation aircraft to help make their businesses more efficient, productive and successful.