

AT PORTLAND'S COMMUNITY AIRPORTS, CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE

As Port of Portland officials know, managing the perception of airport noise is just as important as managing the noise itself. That's why their airport noise management program relies on public outreach and advocacy to address the local community's concerns about airports.



“We try to get the message out that an aircraft is a management tool.”



In thousands of homes in the greater Portland, OR area, small bright blue magnets stuck to refrigerators and other objects encourage residents to contact the Port of Portland Noise Management Department with their questions or comments about aircraft noise. The magnets, which provide easily accessible contact information, have been handed out at many dozens of community meetings and events attended by noise department staff.

Although some airport officials and noise managers in other parts of the U.S. might shy away from having their telephone number and web site so readily available to local residents, Port of Portland Noise Manager Jason Schwartz and his staff are very deliberately reaching out and encouraging community input on aircraft noise concerns. An expert on the non-acoustic factors that can influence community annoyance associated with aircraft noise – trust, attitude toward the noise source, predictability, avoidability and perceived costs/benefits are a few examples – Schwartz is a strong believer in public outreach and community involvement as part of a balanced approach to dealing with aircraft noise management. According to Schwartz, this means addressing both non-acoustic as well as acoustic factors such as noise levels, the number of events, maximum noise levels and event durations.

BRIDGING THE GAP

“Our role is to advocate, educate and collaborate,” says Schwartz, who points out that even though aircraft have been getting substantially quieter over the years, noise remains the primary source of adverse community reaction to airport operations or proposed expansions.

Jeff Gilley, NBAA’s director of airports & ground infrastructure, agrees that reducing only the acoustic sources of aircraft noise is probably not enough to address community concerns with airports nationwide. “We in business aviation need to do more to bridge the gap between our community and communities surrounding airports,” says Gilley, who applauds the efforts of Schwartz’s department.

In Oregon, Schwartz is responsible for noise programs at the Port of Portland’s three airports: Portland International Airport (PDX), Hillsboro Airport (HIO) and Troutdale Airport (TTD). Noise concerns are predictably more pronounced at the largely commercial PDX, but as the second-busiest airport in Oregon with substantial business operations and a large amount of rotary and fixed-wing training, Hillsboro also has its share of noise-related issues.

Through dozens of community, outreach, and public events they attend every year – nearly 70 in 2010 – as well as the distribution of the magnets, brochures, noise reports and information posted in neighborhood publications, the Port of Portland Noise Management Department is constantly educating local residents, public officials, neighborhood associations and others about the economic and social importance of the airports to the Portland area, in addition to disseminating information about what the Port, the Federal Aviation Administration and aircraft operators are doing to mitigate it.

“We talk about the thousands of jobs that are generated by companies having access to the airports,” says Schwartz. “We try not to focus just on noise but on the value of the airport to the community.” Many residents were unaware of the role that the Portland airports play in air ambulance or medical flights, law enforcement, fire fighting training and other related services. “One person even apologized for her noise complaint after we investigated its source and found out it was a Lifeguard flight,” says Schwartz. Overall, noise complaints are trending down, and Schwartz believes the overall count would be higher without the Port’s efforts.

ONGOING OUTREACH

Other community outreach programs include a Port-sponsored PDX Citizen Noise Advisory Committee (CNAC) that “seeks to limit and reduce the impact of aircraft noise related to Portland International Airport in consideration of, and respect for, the community’s environment, health and quality of life,” as well as raise the community’s understanding of aviation noise. The noise management department also works with pilots in implementing quieter procedures through a PDX Fly Quiet program and a newly launched Fly Friendly program at HIO, as well as such

tools as a Ground Run-Up Enclosure at PDX and satellite enhanced (RNAV) noise abatement departure procedures at PDX and HIO. Hillsboro recently added a designated run-up pad to reduce noise impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

At HIO, the Port hosts the Hillsboro Airport Issues Roundtable (HAIR), whose public meetings address issues of relevance to the surrounding communities. True to the Port's intent to involve all stakeholders, HAIR members include elected officials, the FAA, community residents, airport tenants and others with an interest in HIO operations.

Ken Dyar, operating manager for the Hillsboro Airport Business Association (HABA) and a member of HAIR, says that HABA members – including Hillsboro Aviation, a large helicopter training and charter facility as well as fixed wing FBO with sales and service, and Global Aviation, an FBO and charter and management company, and others – work together with the Port of Portland in hosting Airport Days, during which airport businesses open their doors to the public and “explain the mission of their businesses,” according to Dyar. The HIO-based Nike, Inc. flight department also gets involved, and Dyar says that all HIO tenants are active in speaking to local groups and promoting the



value of the airport. “We try to get the message out that an aircraft is a management tool,” says Dyar.

Schwartz of the Port of Portland puts it well: “If we don’t effectively work with our local community, it will have a negative effect on aviation stakeholders. Lack of community support – or worse, community opposition – can cause project delays, increase costs and ultimately impair our ability to best serve the aviation community. It is in our best interests to collaborate with all stakeholders.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For airport advocacy information, see *NBAA Airports Handbook*, www.nbaa.org/airportshandbook
- For general airports issues, contact NBAA Director, Airports & Infrastructure Jeff Gilley at jjgilley@nbaa.org
- For Northwest regional issues, contact NBAA Regional Representative Kristi Ivey at kivey@nbaa.org



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.