

New forecast service offered for airport

TAF service will enhance safety

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MT. VERNON — The National Weather Service will now provide a terminal aerodrome forecast for Mt. Vernon Airport which should enhance the safety, security and economy of the facility, NWS officials say.

A terminal aerodrome forecast (TAF) is a detailed forecast of meteorological conditions significant to aviation within five statute miles of an airport's runway complex, states an NWS news release. It may also contain forecasts of significant weather in the airport's vicinity, out to 10 statute miles. The NWS will provide four of these forecasts a day, plus amendments as necessary. The weather conditions are forecasted for a 24-hour period at most of the airports where the service is offered, including Mt. Vernon's, the release states.

"Mt. Vernon Outland Airport is excited to be partnering with the National Weather Service at Paducah, Kentucky," said Mt. Vernon Airport Director Chris Collins. "NWS meteorologists will generate a Terminal Area Forecast four times daily for the airport. The availability of a TAF in an area previously void of such resources will make flight planning easier — translating to an additional margin of safety for all those operating into and out of the area."

Collins announced the new TAF service at Tuesday night's Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners meeting. The service officially began at noon on Wednesday.

According to the NWS news release, the service should greatly benefit the airport's current tenants and transient aircraft population. Some examples of tenants

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who should benefit include: an International Airline Pilot Flight Academy, a fixed base operator that offers pilot training, an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner, two helicopter services and an Experimental Aircraft Association chapter.

"Also benefiting is an annual Light Sport Aircraft exposition, among other events, as will air cargo operations with the airport near the intersection of two major interstate highways," the release states.

The service is provided to the airport for free and will fill a long-standing void in TAF services between Belleville and Evansville, Indiana, and Decatur and Paducah, Kentucky, officials say.

"The Mt. Vernon TAF is filling a gap across Southern Illinois," said NWS Meteorologist Sean Poulos.

Also on Tuesday, the Mt. Vernon Airport Board approved a bond interest levy abatement to prevent a potential tax increase. The ordinance in question calls for the abatement of \$16,190 from the 2018 tax levy.

Last year, the board approved a similar ordinance to abate \$15,053 from the 2017 tax levy. Both of these abatements were necessary because of incorrect assumptions made by airport officials on the amount of bonds sold in 2016 and the tax levy schedules necessary for debt services. These assumptions pertained to the Momentum 2020 Capital Development Plan.

By making the abatements, the Airport Authority is able to keep its promise to taxpayers to not have a tax increase, Collins said.

In addition Tuesday, the Airport Board discussed the airport's Annual Aviation Report. Among other things, the report indicates that the airport's total operations increased 20 percent in 2018 compared to the prior year. The total operations were at 26,030 take-offs and landings in 2018, up from 20,808 take-



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FORECAST SERVICE — A new terminal aerodrome forecast generated by the National Weather Service is now being provided to the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. The service includes a detailed forecast of meteorological conditions.

offs and landings in 2017.

Collins said the prime factor behind the increase was how Airgo Incorporated was operating at full strength nearly all year. Airgo is an International Airline Pilot Training Academy, Sentinel archives state.

The airport last year also saw an increase in three aircraft. Total based inventory is currently at 53, including 40 Single Engine Land, 10 Multi-Engine Land and 3 Helo aircraft.

"We have at least one exciting new airplane coming to join the family — stay tuned for more updates," Collins said.

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Despite the good news overall, however, the Aviation Report does show that jet operations are moving in the wrong direction. These operations were at 140 take-offs and landings in 2018, down from 172 in 2017.

"A majority of developers, location scouts, retention visitors, etc., utilize jet equipment," Collins said. "I still attribute this metric to the poor perception of doing business in our state."

The Airport Board Tuesday also discussed insurance matters, an engineering agreement and the Momentum 2023 project.

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