



Chapter 736 Newsletter for July 2008

Congress Extends FAA Budget to September 30

With the FAA budget reauthorization bill stalled in the Senate, both houses of Congress this week passed a continuing resolution to fund the FAA through the end of September 2008. The House passed legislation on Tuesday, while the Senate voted for the extension on Thursday to extend the agency's existing budget through September 30, 2008.

The budget extension would keep the lights on at the agency for another three months, but it leaves a lot of long-term FAA programs and projects in limbo because no one knows what the final FAA budget bill will include. Among the items left hanging are much-needed air traffic control modernization projects.

The House passed its version of the new FAA budget bill (H.R.2881) in September 2007, without any general aviation (GA) user fees. The Senate version of the bill (S.B.1300) was stalled for months over the issue of user fees. In late April, a compromise between Senate committees removed GA user fees from S.B.1300, but the measure stalled again over labor provisions and other non-aviation issues. If passed, the bills would fund the FAA through 2011.

In their present form, neither H.R.2881 nor S.B.1300 would impose any GA user fees. That is good news for general aviation, but the bills have a long way to go to become law. No one knows what compromises may come out of the process before it's done. And the president has threatened to veto any bill that doesn't include the administration's proposals, including GA user fees.

The House will be in summer recess until September 6; the Senate until September 8. Given the current deadlock and the upcoming November election, aides say there is little chance that Congress will pass a new FAA budget bill this year.

From FAASTeam/ FAA Safety

General Aviation and Density Altitude

Notice Number: NOTC1281

Trivia question: What is the temperature for a "Standard" day in Albuquerque, NM?
Answer: Would you believe about 40°F! And when was the last day this year that Albuquerque had a temperature of 40°F? April 28 at 3:59 a.m. The next "Standard" day may not be until October.

The article about General Aviation and Density Altitude, which you can find at this link:

https://faasafety.gov/files/notices/2008/Jul/GASafety_and_DAlt.pdf

is written by pilots/engineers, so it gives some great insight into the problems we face as General Aviation pilots pertaining to density altitude. We invite you to read and ponder this article before you plan your next flight this summer.

We welcome your feedback on this article. You can provide us your feedback using the Aviation Safety Customer Feedback Form available on the internet at:

http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/avs/customer_feedback/air/field/

Please choose Small Airplane (ACE) from the pull-down menu and provide your comments in the space provided.

Computer system predicts dangerous clouds

Scientists say they have developed technology for helping pilots avoid those pesky pop-up thunderstorms. They'll throw in turbulence prediction at no extra charge.

The computer system developed by a team of researchers at the University of Alabama uses data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's GOES weather satellites to provide 15-minute to one-hour warnings of thunderstorms by tracking changes in cloud temperature and water vapor. Researchers say this is the first time forecasters have had a tool to predict storms locally. Doppler radar, for instance, only tracks rain after it starts to fall.

The team has determined that one of the most important factors in predicting thunderstorms is temperature change. If the top of a cloud cools by 4 degrees C (7.2 degrees F) or more in 15 minutes, it means the cloud is growing quickly and that there is an increasing probability of rain beginning within 30 minutes to an hour.

John Mecikalski, an assistant professor of atmospheric science at the university, got the idea for the system in 2001. He was looking for a way to determine which of the thousands of cumulus clouds on any given summer day would become convective. Called satellite convection analysis and tracking system (SATCASTS), it has been accurate in its storm forecasts between 65 and 75 percent of the time.

SATCASTS has been in place for three years and is operated by university scientists for the National Weather Service's forecast office in Huntsville, Ala.. Later this summer a version of the weather program will begin forecasting storms in Central America, southern New Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. The FAA's air traffic control center in New York City is testing the system. If successful, it could be rolled out worldwide.

Researchers say the system is relatively inexpensive and easy to install because it uses freely distributed weather data from existing satellite sensors.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held at OWK on Tuesday, July 15 at 7:30 p.m.