

Apple Valley airport expands

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APPLE VALLEY — The Apple Valley Airport is expanding, with new hangars, new business partnerships and a large air show in the works.

The airport is putting finishing touches on two new buildings with 18 hangars each, said Manager Terry Stover, which will easily be filled by a waiting list 65-people long. Stover hopes to move the new occupants in by June 1.

Stover is also in talks with Pacific West Aircraft, who approached him about starting operations locally.

On Sept. 27, the airport will host the Victor Valley Air Show for the first time since the mid-1990s. It will move from the Hesperia Airport to the Apple Valley Airport. Stover said the show will include aerobatics, stationary World War II planes, vendors with food and souvenirs for sale and more. It will be free for the public.

Aside from these grand plans, day-to-day business at the airport consists mainly of individuals who lease hanger space and pay to use the runways for their private planes, most of which are Pipers and Cessnas. Stover said they average 37,500 “operations” each year, including any take-offs or landings.

Even with the temperature soaring just above 100 degrees, several long-time leasers were hunkered down in their hangars. For some the space looked like a second home, with a barbecue and misters out back.

“We call them airport bums,” Stover said, smiling fondly at the regulars.

Out on the main runway Monday afternoon, Philip Proulx, a project director with Land Resource Investments, was getting ready to board a shiny red Cirrus plane on its way to Nevada. Proulx said the company plane has picked him up from the Apple Valley airport several times before, transporting him to and from project sites.

This brief stop was likely a free one, with no charge for “transients” at the airport less than three hours. Others are charged \$5 or \$8 per day, depending on the number of engines.

Meanwhile, developer Floyd Johnston landed on the airport’s main runway. Stover said he has been in and out almost daily to work on a piping project in Hesperia.

“And that’s pretty much normal activity for us here,” Stover said.

Business is steady, though Stover said the price of fuel has also affected pilots a bit. The self-service Chevron station at the airport advertises gas at \$5 to \$5.42 per gallon.

Though Victorville's Southern California Logistics Airport tends to overshadow Apple Valley's smaller facility, located at the end of Corwin Road in north Apple Valley, Stover said the airports are not competitive at all.

"We're complimentary," he said. "They're all about the big stuff and we're all about the little stuff."

As an example, Stover said SCLA Director Peter Soderquist keeps his personal plane at the Apple Valley Airport.

The airport has more than doubled in size — both in terms of acres and hangars — since it was built in 1970. The airport replaced the original airport near Town Hall, which was squeezed out by development. San Bernardino County took control of the site in the mid-1970s.

The California Highway Patrol has leased a hangar at the airport for two years. CHP pilot Bryant Townley said the facility and location are convenient to cover the High Desert, sending emergency crews to crash sites and patrolling inaccessible areas.

Two flight schools also lease space at the airport: Apple Valley and Midfield aviation schools.

The airport now has 804 acres, with just 15 percent developed. Much of the property must remain open land as a safety buffer, but there is certainly room for continued growth.

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