

Airport Beacon Report



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THE "4-A" APPROACH TO GENERAL AVIATION SECURITY

By Randy D. Bisgard and Michael A. Hodges

As we approach the five year anniversary of the events of 9/11, it is import to remind ourselves of the importance of airport security. The following article offers a "4-A" approach to GA Security and suggests ways that your FBOs can enhance general aviation security by implementing some basic good business practices.

Awareness

"Know your customer" seems like a simple, basic principle, and it is. However, the more important issue is to be aware of who is not the customer. I cannot count the number of times that I have walked into FBOs across the country, looking in doors, around corners, walking down hallways, etc., and never been questioned. Granted, I may not have appeared to be a threat to the customer service reps and line personnel, but the reality is that I could have been. Make sure that all FBO employees are constantly aware of what's going on around them, and are trained to ask questions if they see someone they don't know or recognize, or if something just does not "look right". Make sure your FBO trains them to confront the unusual individuals or situations in a professional and non-threatening way. That way, if they are a current or prospective customer, they will come away with the feeling that you are acting to protect them as well as the business.

Acknowledgment

Similarly, I've spent time walking around hangars and terminal buildings (even jumping the fence a time or two), and peeking into a few airplanes on the



ramp, only to be faced with some confused and more often unconcerned looks from linemen. Believe it or not, I even get an occasional wave. The reason hangar and tie down customers leave their aircraft in an FBO's hands is that they assume they are going to take care of it and make sure it is not compromised.

Have your FBO account for everyone that accesses the ramp and the aircraft on it. The FBO should consider issuing identification cards to employees and based tenants. There is reasonably priced technology available today that allows an FBO to make its own ID badges on-site, as well as visitor badges for transient pilots and guests. As with all security, while this is largely for increased "perceived" surveillance, it might be seen as a welcome addition by customers. Not only does it make them feel like they're part of the solution, it also shows commitment to the situation.

Also, recommend that your FBO establish and promote a designated "security officer" for the company. Through this individual, they should develop a security manual, including written

procedures for handling such things as identifying unusual individuals and situations, emergency procedures, phone threats, handling the media, and emergency contact numbers for airport, local, and Federal authorities.

Access

Controlling access to a facility is critical. Too many aviation businesses offer total access to their entire facility to any stranger off the street. Other than common customer reception areas such as the flight lounge, no one should have access to other areas of a business without first checking in.

When visiting airports around the country, it's common to be able to walk right into the storage/maintenance hangar, a private office area, or even around the fuel storage facilities with ease. Many of these facilities could be easily controlled with button-coded door locks or other access systems. Your FBO should limit all access to the ramp and tie down areas.

It's not unreasonable for your FBO to ask anyone who accesses the ramp to sign in and out. Have them keep a log of people that access the ramp; then if something happens, there's a record. If someone doesn't pass through the FBO terminal, make sure the FBO's line personnel checks with everyone they come in contact with and that they've signed in.

Aversion

Everyone knows that Authorized Personnel Only signs and locks keep the honest people honest, but do little to deter the person that's intent on committing a crime. However, having the right sign is more important than just having a sign. Making sure your FBO knows how to report a suspicious person, and to whom, is an important feature of ramp security. Perhaps signs of the inside of the fence make as much sense as on the outside, offering information such as whom to call and the phone number. In these days where cell phones are the norm instead of the exception, remind your FBOs that something as simple as this could assist other pilots to quickly get the word to appropriate FBO personnel or authorities.

Other signs could be equally effective. "Ramp Monitored by Video Surveillance" could be productive deterrent, especially if accompanied by a few visible cameras. Or, "All Persons Must Register with the FBO". The goal is to get those intent on committing a crime to think twice about doing it.

BASICS OF SMALL AIRPORT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

October 14 and 15, 2006

New Orleans, Louisiana

The *Basics of Small Airport Management* workshop is again scheduled to be presented by Michael A. Hodges and Bobbi Thompson in conjunction with the AAAE National Airports Conference scheduled in October in New Orleans. This interaction and informative workshop provides an overview of most property, business, and management issues facing airports today. The workshop is beneficial for those new to the airport management field, as well as those of you with years of experience, and qualifies for 12 CEU credits by AAAE. Contact AAAE to get registered.

PASSENGER LOADING BRIDGES - ALLEVIATING THE FINANCIAL BURDEN TO THE AIRLINES

By Mark R. Davidson, A.A.E., Vice President

From time to time, we have been contacted to perform valuations on passenger loading bridges. These appraisals have been conducted for a number of reasons, but lately we have noticed a trend of airports purchasing (and then leasing back) passenger loading bridges from airlines to obtain control of the assets, as well as alleviate the airline from the financial burden of owning and maintaining the bridge. Although it can be expensive with regard to capital and maintenance, airports that own and operate their own bridges can realize a number benefits. These include maintenance synergies, gate utilization flexibility, and the ability to market the asset to potential airlines that are not presently serving the community. As more

and more airlines focus on their own core business, which is flying passengers from point A to point B, airports that accommodate facility needs, as well as other services such as ground handling, will have the upper hand.

But before acquiring all the bridges in your airport, it is important to understand the manufacturers and the market. There are basically three major airport passenger boarding bridge manufacturers that market in the United States: FMC, Thyssenkrupp, and Dewbridge. Other manufactures such as Mitsubishi, LTI, Wollard, and Apex have either discontinued their lines or do not focus on marketing their products.

The types of passenger loading bridges vary from Apron Drive, Fixed Pedestal, Sliding-T and Teleradial, all with different attributes and restrictions. Most of the bridges are constructed of steel; however, a few of the manufacturers started to offer a line of glass bridges. These types of bridges are popular in Europe and cost approximately 15% more than the typical steel bridges. The following briefly describes the different types of bridges and attributes.

Apron Drive - The apron drive passenger boarding bridge is a telescoping passageway that can be driven from a parked position beside the terminal to the aircraft itself. Apron drive bridges come in a variety of lengths and options, depending on the needs of the airport and the manufacturer.

Fixed Pedestal - Depending on the model selected, the pedestal bridge is capable of serving numerous commercial jet aircraft in operation. The fixed pedestal passenger bridges vary by the distance of vertical lift and the horizontal travel of the tunnel. A single lift column with single drive is used for lesser vertical distances, and a single lift column with dual drive is available for greater vertical distances.

Sliding T - Another bridge that can be found across the country is the “Sliding T” bridge. These bridges are fixed to the ground and the top of the “T” extends to and from the aircraft. Just like the apron bridges,

these bridges can be combined with variable length walkways and stairs to accommodate terminal design and aircraft configuration. It should also be noted that the Sliding T, as well as the fixed pedestal bridges require more foundation work and the savings may be lost.

In addition to the bridges, it important to understand the need for a converter and preconditioned air units, which can be capital intensive. In order to use the power from the terminal building, a converter must be installed. In addition to the converter, a number of passenger loading bridges contain preconditioned air units. These units allow for the complete shut down of the aircraft’s auxiliary power unit while the aircraft is parked at the gate.

So now that you are familiar with the manufacturers, models and other components, we can take a quick look at the used passenger loading bridge market. As you may have guessed, the used bridge market is unique. The cost of moving a bridge from one airport to another is expensive, and in many cases, cost prohibitive if the bridge requires considerable refurbishment. Of the manufacturers mentioned, FMC is the only one who advised that they refurbish and resell passenger loading bridges. Often they will negotiate a trade-in deal similar to a car dealership. In these types of deals, the airport will receive credit for their old bridges when they purchase new ones. In addition to trade-ins, FMC will scan the used market to find models that can be refurbished and resold. Not all models can be considered and FMC advised that the fixed bridges are not flexible on the used market.

In summary, when analyzing a potential bridge acquisition, consider the manufacturer, condition, capabilities, age, model type, and market. For instance, acquiring a bridge for a low price might not always be a great deal. Believe it or not, refurbishment prices can be very expensive, and finding replacement parts can be a nightmare. However, if you have no plans of moving the bridge, it might not be a bad deal.

ASK ABS

A monthly part of our newsletter is a section called "Ask ABS", where we answer aviation-related questions from our readership. (If we do not receive a question, we make one up.) Each month we publish one question that we receive with a joint reply from our professional consulting team. As stated in our last issue, we would REALLY appreciate more questions from our readers, as we are getting tired of making up questions. Please submit any questions via e-mail to Mark Davidson at: mdavidson@airportbusiness.net

This month's question is as follows: *The only FBO on my airport keeps asking me about Minimum Standards. Specifically, he wants to stop providing flight training and piston maintenance. It is currently required of FBOs in our Minimum Standards, but we also have 2 independent flight schools and a maintenance SASO on the field. Should I let him stop providing these services?*

Well, this is really a common question (which is why I made it up). The reason that your Minimum Standards requires an FBO to provide services such as flight training and piston maintenance is probably because the "founding fathers" wanted to make sure that these services were provided on the airport, and requiring the FBO to provide them for the privilege of providing fuel was their justification. However, the fact that these services are currently being provided on the airport, and the FBO has no other competitor that is required to provide the services, may provide justification to cut them a break. Consider giving them a temporary waiver to cease providing these services as long as there are independent SASOs providing these services, and as long as there is not a pending application for a second FBO at the airport. However, make sure they understand that they will have 30 days to comply with prevailing Minimum Standards should the SASOs disappear or competition comes knocking.

COMMENTS ON GETTING OLD

I've sure gotten old! I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees. Fought prostate cancer and diabetes. I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts. Have bouts with dementia. Have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and feet anymore. Can't remember if I'm 85 or 92. Have lost all my friends. But, thank God, I still have my driver's license.

An elderly woman decided to prepare her will and told her preacher she had two final requests. First, she wanted to be cremated, and second, she wanted her ashes scattered over Wal-Mart. "Wal-Mart?" the preacher exclaimed. "Why Wal-Mart?" "Then I'll be sure my daughters visit me twice a week."

My memory's not as sharp as it used to be. Also, my memory's not as sharp as it used to be.

Airport Business Solutions is recognized as the leader in providing valuation, analysis, and consulting services to airports and aviation businesses, and offers a diversity of backgrounds and experience which provides a new, creative, and "outside the box" perspective on a myriad of aviation issues and problems.

In addition, our international affiliate, Airport Business Solutions International, AEC, has helped numerous airports worldwide with a variety of airport management and operational issues and problems. Problems at international airports are no different from those experienced at airports in the U.S., and the diversity of experience and breadth of knowledge of Airport Business Solutions International has been extremely valuable in achieving comprehensive solutions to those issues.

For More Information
Michael A. Hodges, MAI
President/CEO
Airport Business Solutions
10014 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Suite 101
Tampa, Florida 33618
Phone (813) 269-2525
Fax (813) 269-8022
mhodes@airportbusiness.net
www.airportbusiness.net