WHAT IS GENERAL AVIATION

THE SIMPLE ANSWER:
General aviation is all civilian flying except scheduled passenger airline service.

AS SIMPLE AS THAT?
Yes. And as complex as that. General aviation includes flying as diverse as overnight package delivery and a weekend visit back home; as different as emergency medical evacuation and inspection trips to remote construction sites; as complimentary as aerial application to keep crops healthy and airborne law enforcement to keep the peace.

General aviation benefits the community in so many ways, it’s hard to cover them all. We scan a few of them on the following pages.

FLYING GENERAL AVIATION GIVES YOU THE WORLD’S BEST VIEW.
Learning to fly general aviation aircraft is well within the capabilities of the average person, intellectually and physically. Even some disabilities—deafness, for instance—need not keep a person who really wants to fly out of the cockpit.

General aviation has an excellent and steadily improving safety record. Since the big surge in private and business flying that followed WWII, the total accident rate has decreased by more than 85%—down to just seven accidents per 100,000 flight hours. The latest data shows general aviation flies more than 20 million hours each year.

More than 90% of the roughly 220,000 civil aircraft registered in the United States are general aviation aircraft. And of the nation’s approximately 600,000 pilots, an estimated 500,000+ fly general aviation airplanes. Incidentally, many airline pilots also fly general aviation aircraft— for pleasure! The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) has nearly 400,000 members.

The great fleet of general aviation aircraft is the mainspring of a $20 billion a year industry, which generates more than $150 billion in economic activity. Thousands of communities benefit as their airports create a positive ripple effect in the local economy.
For both business and personal travel, general aviation means going where you want to go (not just where the airlines go) when you want to go (free from airline schedules), and in a greater degree of privacy.

The payoff is greater transportation flexibility and productivity than any other mode of travel can provide. But even those who never seize these advantages benefit, because general aviation works for the community, bolstering the economy and providing essential services.

### General Aviation Saves Lives

Every day, general aviation transports blood supplies, vital transplant organs, and other time-critical, lifesaving elements. Air ambulances carry out medevac rescues and provide urgent transportation to trauma and other emergency centers. Many pilots volunteer their services (and often the use of their own aircraft) to transport patients who cannot endure land travel to distant, specialized treatment centers. Local volunteer pilot organizations provide such services at no cost to patients in need.

Helicopter emergency medical evacuation is nearly doubling survival rates by getting accident victims to hospitals within the first critical “golden hour.”

### General Aviation Protects Our Environment

The most efficient and cost-effective way to conduct wildlife surveys, map wetland losses and soil erosion, follow bird migrations, patrol parklands, and detect pipeline spills is with general aviation aircraft. Specially equipped government and private aircraft gather information vital to the work of wildlife specialists, park rangers, prospectors, environmentalists, and many others.

General aviation has long been our front line in fighting forest fires. Helicopter and fixed-wing water bombers save millions of acres of woodlands each year, protecting homes, national parks, and the nation's precious forests.

### General Aviation Aids Agriculture

Ag pilots treat more than 75 million acres of cropland each year, boosting production of the nation's agricultural bounty. Planting, too, can often be done more efficiently by air: Ninety-five percent of the U.S. rice crop is planted by aircraft. Ranchers use general aviation aircraft to manage herds and grazing land.

### General Aviation Makes Your Driving Safer, Smoother

Airborne traffic reporters broadcasting on radio and television help millions of Americans in their daily commute, reporting accidents and other tie-ups to drivers and the police.

On a trip, you’ll use maps drawn and updated from aerial photo data. That basic information is also used by urban planners, engineers, and government agencies to plan street and highway construction and other infrastructure improvements.

### General Aviation Works While You Sleep

All night long, general aviation expedites financial transactions by transporting canceled checks and other documents throughout the Federal Reserve System.

By cutting down the cost of “float” until checks clear, general aviation plays a vital role in banking and commerce.

General aviation also flies important documents and overnight packages on their way to offices, factories, and individuals under next-day time pressures. Express freight, like vital machine parts and mail to small towns, also move by fast and flexible general aviation to thousands of locations where the major air carriers don't fly.

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