



Why Fly A Leader?

Most local, state and national political leaders who make decisions about general aviation airports have never flown from one. Consequently, decisions that hurt pilots can be ill-informed. You can wait for an unfavorable decision, or start the education process right now: Fly A Leader.

Non-pilots seem to have just two views about airports: If it has airline service, it is a noisy convenience. If not, it is a hazardous nuisance. Neither view is flattering; the latter one can ground you.

By the time your airport comes under fire, it may be too late. So Fly A Leader today before problems develop that could close your airport.

Who Is A Leader?

Anyone with decision-making power over your local airport is a candidate for a flight. So are the staff who serve the decision-makers. First try those who represent your area or district, since you have the clout of being a constituent. Leaders can also be zoning board members, highway planners, civic group leaders, business people and plant managers.

Making Contact...

Watch for leaders who make comments about general aviation or the local airport in the press. Write or call them, explain you are aware they are dealing with aviation issues, and ask if they would like to see aviation first-hand. First contact the leaders you know best. They can be your introduction to others for future flights.

Planning The Flight...

The type of flight you provide depends on your passenger. The zoning committee member may want to see the site of the new shopping mall. The mayor may want to see the new industrial park. The highway planner might enjoy a flight at rush hour over congested roads. Encourage them to bring a camera and research local issues from the air. They just might get the idea that general aviation is a very useful tool! Be sure to stress what pilots can do to be good neighbors. Climb away from populated areas quickly, explaining that you are following noise abatement procedures. After level-off, emphasize that Federal Aviation Regulations prevent aircraft from flying low over populated areas. If you know, you might point out all the homes that were built near the airport AFTER the airport was established. The point: noise problems at many airports are the result of poor land-use planning. It would be ideal if an air ambulance could be at the airport during your flight, but that is unlikely. Still, you can point out flight school aircraft, corporate aircraft and other signs of economic activity at the airport. Let your guest know what really goes on at our airports. Another example: Are law enforcement aircraft or helicopters based there? Let them know that even "non-towered" airports have rules and traffic patterns that all pilots follow. Finally, since your airport is the welcome mat to your community, give your visitor a pilot's impression of the airport. Does it have instrument approaches? Lighting? Rental cars? Restrooms and telephones? Assess whether it meets the needs of business visitors and tourists. As souvenirs of the flight, you can present an AOPA First Flight certificate, the brochure "*What is General Aviation?*" and AOPA's Aviation Fact Card. Call the Communications Division at 1-800-USA-AOPA.

Tips For Success...

DO... give the guest a thorough briefing as to the content and conduct of the flight.
 DO... answer all questions to the best of your ability. But if you don't know an answer, don't fake it. Write down the question and answer by phone or mail later.
 DO... mark your route on a sectional and allow the guest to follow along. Demonstrate how you scan to avoid other traffic.
 DO... shorten the flight if your guest becomes uncomfortable.

Things To Avoid...

DON'T... conduct a VFR flight during "marginal" VFR weather conditions.
 DON'T... use the flight as a means of ventilating all of your complaints about local or federal government policies with which you disagree.
 DON'T... turn the flight into an aerobatic joyride or a stall recovery demonstration. Non-pilots want the ride to be as smooth as possible.
 DON'T... fly in an aircraft that needs painting or interior repairs. DO make sure all the proper documents are on board. Have an airsick bag easily accessible but hidden from view.

A Few Points To make...

- There are more than 19,000 landing facilities in the U.S., but scheduled airlines serve less than 400 of them. General aviation serves all of them.
- There are nearly 206,000 aircraft in the U.S.
- General aviation is enjoying its best safety record ever - twice as good as 10-15 years ago, and five to 10 times better over the last 50 years.
- Once a community loses an airport to development, chances are it will never be replaced.
- In 1991, 387 landing facilities were abandoned.
- There are more than 640,000 pilots in the U.S.

Have fun and fly safely!

AOPA has other outreach programs, including: Fly A Teacher, Fly A Leader, Fly A Friend, and How to Have a Successful Media Event.

For more information write:
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 Or call us at 1-800-USA-AOPA

