

# Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

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## 2021 Montana Aviation Conference Canceled

Article by Mike Vivion, AOM President

The Board of Directors of the Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM) recently voted to cancel the 2021 Montana Aviation Conference, which was to be held in Billings February 25-27, 2021. While this cancellation may seem premature to many, there are two primary factors which drove that decision.

There are a lot of pieces that have to be put in place for the Conference each year, including efforts that should be starting right now. Speakers, vendors, and schedules all have to be contacted and arranged, which requires a tremendous amount of work well ahead of the event. We can't delay those preparations, and we can't make all the arrangements based on a "hope" that the Conference will happen.

Secondly, AOM has a contract with the conference hotel in Billings, which includes a cancellation fee if the event is cancelled. That cancellation fee is already substantial, and if we wait much longer to make the decision to cancel, it increases considerably. AOM member organizations may be on the hook for those fees, although we intend to exercise a "Possibilities clause" in the contract which waives the fee in the event of natural disasters, etc. Few would argue that the COVID-19 pandemic is not a disaster.

In a best-case scenario, we estimate that we might have half the number of attendees at the event if we were to go forward with it. With social distancing, that's about all the venue could accommodate, and that level of attendance would result in the conference losing a great deal of money. That deficit would have to be made up by AOM member organizations, none of whom have deep pockets.

So, as much as it pains me to be the one to convey this news, let's all look forward to the 2022 Aviation Conference, which will be in held in Missoula March 3-5, 2022. I hope to see you all there!

## Marc McKee Joins the Aeronautics Team

Marc McKee made the trek to Helena from Ohio by way of California to join MDT in July of 2020 as the Airport and Airways Bureau Chief. Marc started his flying career at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, while graduating *magna cum laude* with a degree in Aviation.

After graduation, Marc returned to Cleveland to begin flight instructing. There he met some fellow entrepreneurs interested in creating a 141-flight center, as one did not exist in the local area. He developed a 141 curriculum and grew the flight school into three locations adding additional services such as aircraft management, insurance, and managing city airports. The school also developed an international wing to train students from Germany, Russia, and India.

Marc also worked as an airport manager in Ohio, accomplishing multiple airport improvement projects during his tenure. The new customer bases allowed expansion into some corporate flying where Marc flew CEOs and board members across the east coast in Cessna 441s. When a few of the corporations sold to conglomerates, he decided to look into Guard/Reserve options.



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Marc McKee Photo Credit: MDT

Options were limited so he pursued a contractor route to support both the Air Force and Army in various flying contracts in Afghanistan. Over five years later, his now wife (who is also an aviation enthusiast/private pilot) had encouraged him to return state-side where he sold his business to a joint-owned Taiwanese/US company and helped move it to Georgetown, Texas.

With perseverance and some luck, Marc was able to secure employment as a first officer on the Airbus 320 with United Airlines out of San Francisco. His and his wife, Katie, enjoy traveling the world and just about anything to do with airplanes. They frequent Alaska where they enjoy flying a friend's Maule M4, sometimes on floats and sometimes on bush tires. Other hobbies include fishing, spearfishing, and kayaking. Of note, Marc used to run Dungeness crab traps on the open ocean off his Ocean Trident 15-foot Kayak while living in the Bay Area. He admits to dumping out of the kayak a few times.

Marc's stated priorities at MDT are to help facilitate a safe and fun environment for aviators of all ages to celebrate the wonders Montana has to offer. His diverse background brings a fresh-look perspective to the Aeronautics team conversation of making Montana's airports and airways efficient and useful for all to enjoy.

## Aeronautics Division Awards FY21 Airport Courtesy Car Grants

Montana Statute authorizes the Montana Department of Transportation Aeronautics Division to utilize part of its annual budget to award courtesy cars to eligible airports. In previous years, only two financial grants were available for up to \$2,000 each. Increased funding from HB661 allowed for the expansion of this program leaving a significant positive impact on aviation in Montana. For FY21, four financial grants up to \$5,000 each were available to be used as reimbursement towards a courtesy car.

Four state surplus cars were also to be awarded in FY21 thanks to the 2019 Legislature. Unfortunately, only three airports applied for a vehicle. Do you think your home airport, or an airport you frequent, would benefit from a courtesy car? Is there an airport you want to go to often, but don't because there is no transportation available and it is too far from town? Talk with the airport manager and let them know about our program!

It is important to note the application period for the courtesy car program has changed. **The application period is now available April 1 - May 31** and is open to publicly owned, public-use airports in Montana. Late or incomplete applications cannot be accepted. Visit <https://app.mt.gov/courtesycar/> to apply.

### Airports awarded financial grants for FY21:

- Hot Springs
- Libby
- Phillipsburg
- Polson

### Airports awarded a surplus vehicle grant for FY21:

- Roundup
- Hardin
- Winifred



MDT Aeronautics surplus vehicles  
Photo Credit: Aeronautics Staff

For more information on the Courtesy Car Program, contact Karen Speeg at the Aeronautics Division at (406) 444-2506 or email [kaspeeg@mt.gov](mailto:kaspeeg@mt.gov).



Tim Conway, Administrator

**Montana and the Sky**  
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Steve Bullock, Governor  
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P.O. Box 200507  
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Follow MDT on social media!



# Meadow Creek Work Session

The annual work session for Meadow Creek took place on June 20, 2020. Montana Aeronautics flew in to assist with the effort. Volunteers took turns with the new deck mower brought in last month, while others weed-whacked around the cones and tie-down area.



Volunteer Dan Skalsky Photo Credit: Scott Newpower

The pilot sign-in box received a new paint job, and a lean-to was built and shingled against the outhouse to store the mower. Some volunteers cleared the pathway of fallen trees, replenishing the firewood supply.



Photo Credit: Scott Newpower



Photo Credit: Aeronautics Staff



Photo Credit: Aeronautics Staff

Around 11 aircraft and 20 people were present to volunteer their time and energy in keeping the airstrip maintained this season.

Thank you to all who attended, the Kalispell EAA chapter for providing lunch, and the Montana Pilot's Association (MPA) for organizing the event.



Photo Credit: Aeronautics Staff

## Schafer Meadows Runway to Close 8/23 to 8/31

The US Forest Service is planning runway work at Schafer Meadows from August 23 through the end of August. **The runway will be NOTAM'd closed during this time.**

The work will smooth, compact, and seed what will be the new runway surface adjacent to the existing runway. The work will be done with a team of mules.

If you are planning to fly to Schafer Meadows any time between these dates, please reschedule your trip. After the work is complete, please do not park on the north side of the runway to allow the ground to settle and new grass to grow.

**CHECK NOTAM's!**

# Browning Airport Gets Upgrade

A new vault toilet was recently installed at the Starr-Browning Airport. It replaced a "well-used" port-a-potty that previously lost its roof in 100 MPH winds.

Solar motion lights on the inside and outside of the building improve convenience of the facility during night hours. A paved walkway from the ramp to the toilet will be added later in the fall.

We would like to thank Cody White and his crew from the MDT Browning Section House for excavating the vault hole and assisting with the placement of the new outhouse.



All photos provided by Aeronautics Staff



## ACE Academy Canceled Montana Search Pilot Clinic Postponed

Due to constraints from COVID-19, this summer's Aviation Exploration Academy has been canceled along with the fly-in at Canyon Ferry on August 19. While this is not the news we hoped for after already postponing the camp this summer, we know it is the right thing to do for public health and safety reason.

In addition, the Aeronautics Division is postponing the Search Pilot Clinic planned for September, 2020. The clinic will be rescheduled when it is once again safe to conduct this training.

## Aviation Quiz

- 1) **You are on a night cross-country flight and notice a beacon flashing “White-Yellow-Green.” It is:**
  - A: Civilian Land Airport
  - B: Water Airport
  - C: Military Airport
  - D: Heliport
  - E: Gliderport
- 2) **Montana requires annual aircraft registration renewal before what date every year?**
  - A: Registration is not required for aircraft in Montana
  - B: By the end of each calendar year
  - C: By the end of the month you purchased your airplane each year
  - D: March 1 every year
- 3) **You are on the ground and see a flashing red light from the tower. That means:**
  - A: Taxi clear of the runway in use
  - B: Taxi back to the ramp
  - C: STOP!
- 4) **You are a non-instrument-rated private pilot and you want to practice some simulated instrument time. Can you do it?**
  - A: Yes, you can do that on your own
  - B: No
  - C: Yes, but you need a safety pilot
  - D: Yes, but you need to have a CFII with you
- 5) **You are reviewing the maintenance logs for your rented 172 and you see the last annual inspection is dated August 1, 2019. Today is August 1, 2020. Is it legal to go flying today?**
  - A: Yes, but only if you get a ferry permit first
  - B: No
  - C: Yes, as long as other required inspection items are within date also
  - D: Yes, the annual expires at midnight tonight
- 6) **Montana has approximately how many public-use airports?**
  - A: 89
  - B: 126
  - C: 53
  - D: 416

## FAA Expands Extensions to Medical, Training, and Testing Requirements

The FAA will amend Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 118, extending the validity of some medical, training, and testing requirements through September 30, 2020.

However, the new extensions do not give those pilots whose medicals originally expired in March any extra time beyond June 30. Pilots whose medicals would have expired at the end of April, May, June, July, August, or September can add three months to their medical certificate validity in all medical classes except BasicMed.

September is the new cutoff of eligibility for time extensions in the updated SFAR for flight reviews, instrument currency, remote pilot aeronautical knowledge recency, and pilot knowledge exams.

The FAA emphasized this and other “limited extensions” to earlier deadlines under SFAR 118 are to give pilots flexibility in scheduling necessary medical certification and training events as the nation continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials added certificate holders “should seek to schedule those events as soon as it is practical and safe to do so given individual circumstances.”

June 30 remained a hard deadline for some pilots who benefited from the original SFAR, such as flight instructors. Those whose certificates expired from March to May 2020 had until June 30 to renew without having to take a practical test. June 30 remained the last date before the expiration of those instructors’ certificates.

*Article summarized with permission from General Aviation News*

## Aeronautics Board Loan & Grant Application Reminder

As a reminder to Montana Aeronautics airport loan and grant program applicants, the Loan and Grant online portal (<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/loans-grants.shtml>) is accepting FY22 applications from July 1, 2020, through November 15, 2020.

If you cannot enter the website, you may have a previous award that needs a closeout form or a status report filed (required at project completion, or annually). Additionally, projects must be broken down and listed as one project per line item on the application. As an example, asphalt projects should be broken down by runway, apron, and taxiway and not as one project lumped together.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Karen Speeg at (406) 444-9569 or [kaspeeg@mt.gov](mailto:kaspeeg@mt.gov).

# WYS Pilot Campground Improvements

The Yellowstone Airport campground underwent a full makeover! Multiple recent improvements were made, and new amenities were added, greatly enhancing the overall camping experience.



A new pavilion was constructed to provide shelter from the elements and serve as a central gathering place for camping pilots. The communal pavilion is complete with two handmade picnic tables, a fire ring, and a wildlife-proof refuse bin.

The pavilion was constructed by Yellowstone Airport staff with help from a Recreational Aviation Foundation (RAF) volunteer. Some unique reclaimed materials were utilized during its construction including pieces of scrap metal from the old temporary FAA Air Traffic Control tower on field during the infamous 1988 fires in Yellowstone National Park. Earlier this summer, gravel was spread to reduce mud issues and the picnic tables were delivered and placed to complete the pavilion project.



New campfire fire rings throughout the campground were provided by the RAF in 2019, and the picnic tables were purchased and equally split by Montana Aeronautics, the RAF, and the Montana Pilot's Association.



A new concrete vaulted toilet was also installed in May of 2020. This welcomed improvement will serve the campground users for many decades to come.

The Yellowstone Airport is excited to welcome all aviation enthusiasts to the campground and hopes to see you there this season! While there isn't a fee to use the campground, there is a donation box to assist with maintaining this gem in the trees. For any questions or to find out more information please feel free to contact the airport directly (406) 646-7631. All pictures provided by Aeronautics Staff.

## Aeronautics Resale Program



The Montana Aeronautics Division resale program consists of replacement parts and supplies available for Montana private and public-use airports to purchase. We have been busy filling many orders as airports take advantage of the nice summer weather to conduct airport repairs, upgrades, and general maintenance.

The Aeronautics Division keeps an inventory of parts and lamps for runway lighting systems, PAPI and VASI approach lighting systems, airport rotating beacons, windsocks, and frames. We also assist airports in locating hard to find parts for old lighting systems and other parts that may be difficult to locate. See the Resale Program Catalog at [https://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/aero/Resale\\_Catalog.pdf](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/aero/Resale_Catalog.pdf)

Orders can be placed online at <https://app.mt.gov/aeronautics> or contact Derrick Olheiser at [dolheiser@mt.gov](mailto:dolheiser@mt.gov), call (406) 444-9592 or the Aeronautics office at (406) 444-2506).

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. Telephone 406-444-5416 or Montana Relay Service at 711.

# First of Its Kind: New Firefighting Aircraft in Montana

Article by Jayda McClendon, reprinted with permission from NBC MONTANA

**B**ELGRADE, Mont. — Bridger Aerospace in Belgrade gave NBC Montana an inside look at a new plane that will help fight forest fires this season. The aircraft is a CL415EAF built in Canada. It came out of production in April. Bridger Aerospace contracts the plane out to various agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service. One plane can cost up to \$30 million, but its hefty price tag comes with some unique features, including its water capabilities.

“It’s an amphibian, which means we can land and scoop up water off of water bodies and go directly to the fire, whereas all the other aircrafts have to return to the airport to be reloaded,” said Capt. Al Hymers, a lead scooper pilot for Bridger Aerospace. “We can just go to the nearest lake or water source closest to the fire and work.”

These capabilities require extensive training for pilots beforehand. “We spend 25 hours in the simulator over there, and now we’re all going through and starting our flight training in the aircraft now,” said First Officer Barrett Farrell. Crews also have to be ready for unexpected maintenance issues.

“It’s relatively simple, but the thing does shake itself apart, and so we’re doing daily inspections to make sure everything is tight on the aircraft,” said Andrew Hill, director of maintenance for the repair station at Bridger Aerospace. There’s no telling when a fire will break out, that’s why it’s important to get more of the aircrafts built and ready to go. Six more CL415EAFs will arrive in Montana over the next two years. “In situations where people’s homes and valuables are being threatened, this plane can really make a difference,” said Hymers.



**Quiz Answer Key:** 1: D, 2: D, 3: A, 4: C, 5: C, 6: B

## Calendar of Events

**August 01, 2020 — Three Forks Fly-In.** 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual fly-in hosted by the Montana Antique Aircraft Association. Saturday free catered breakfast from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. For more information contact Pat Green (406) 539-1880. **UPDATED**

**August 3 - 7, 2020 — Polson Airport (8S1) Closed.** Polson Airport will be closed for runway work. For more information contact Matt Lindberg at (406) 444-9568 or email [mlindberg@mt.gov](mailto:mlindberg@mt.gov).

**August 9, 2020 — Hysham Lions Club/Chamber Drive-In, Fly-In Breakfast.** Breakfast served 7:00 to 11:00 a.m. weather and virus permitting. For more information contact Bob Miller at (406) 342-5252.

**August 15, 2020 — Polson Airport Fly-In. CANCELED** The public is invited to join pilots for an exciting day of aviation activities, beginning at 8:00 a.m. Watch as visiting aircraft arrive and land. View some fantastic aircraft; from home-built, vintage, War Birds, float-planes, to general aviation aircraft. Free admission! For more information contact Ron Bone at (949) 500-6488.

**August 17-19, 2020 — Aviation Career Exploration (ACE) Camp.** Program geared toward high school students interested in aviation. For more information call (406) 444-2506 or email [mlindberg@mt.gov](mailto:mlindberg@mt.gov) **CANCELED**

**August 22, 2020 — Bowman Fly-In and Car Show.** Starting at 10:00 a.m., food and drinks will be available, with kids games, airplane rides, and awards for best of show and longest distance flown taking place. Other special surprises to be announced. For more information contact Greg at (406) 593-1702.

**August 23 - 31, 2020 — Schafer Meadows Runway Closed.** Schafer Meadows Airport will be closed for runway work. For more information contact Matt Lindberg at (406) 444-9568 or email [mlindberg@mt.gov](mailto:mlindberg@mt.gov).

**September 12, 2020 — Columbus Pancake Breakfast.** Breakfast served 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. For more information contact Hardin Graham (406) 780-0034.

**November 15, 2020 — Airport Loan and Grant Application Period Deadline.** More information can be found at <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/loans-grants.shtm> or contact Karen Speeg at (406) 444-9569 or [kaspeeg@mt.gov](mailto:kaspeeg@mt.gov).

**\*All events are subject to modification or cancellation per the latest COVID-19 guidance\***



**VISION ZERO**

zero deaths · zero serious injuries

MONTANA DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION

**August 2020**

5403

Aeronautics Division

2630 Airport Road

PO Box 200507

Helena, Montana 59620-0507



## **Vision Zero: A Goal for Everyone**

In 2019, there were 184 fatalities on Montana roads.

What does that mean? 184 parents, children, grandparents, friends, siblings, spouses, and other loved ones had lives that were cut short. It also means countless tears and shattered lives for those left with the aftermath of unsafe driving behaviors. Which loved one are you prepared to lose? If your answer is none, then Vision Zero is also YOUR goal.

It will take every one of us to work towards the day that Vision Zero is met, and the fatality total reads "ZERO." Two of the highest contributing factors to traffic fatalities in 2019 were alcohol and no seat belt.

These are behaviors that can be changed! Start by always wearing your seatbelt and planning for sober transportation. Remind your loved ones and those around you to do the same.

**-Director Mike Tooley, MDT**

Visit [www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero) for more information.

**VISION ZERO**  
zero deaths · zero serious injuries

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