

FLIGHT SAFETY

[For safety and quality of life, why doesn't the County of San Diego prohibit aircraft from flying over residential areas including schools and churches?](#)

The County of San Diego is the owner and sponsor of the Palomar Airport and under regulation by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), provides for the safe operation of the airport surface facilities. While the County Airports staff are committed to the safety of aviation and strive continuously to meet all safety requirements within their jurisdiction on the surface of the airport, they do not have authority over aircraft in flight. "The United States Government has exclusive sovereignty of airspace of the United States" — Title 49 USC Subtitle VII Section 40103(a)(1). The [Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\) Air Traffic Organization \(ATO\)](#) controls the flight of aircraft.

[Are there any safety requirements for aircraft and Pilots?](#)

The [FAA Flight Standards District Office \(FSDO\)](#) is responsible for aviation safety. FSDO certifies and licenses aircraft and pilots, provides safety training and conducts safety investigations. Contact the San Diego FSDO at (858) 502-9882 to report safety issues.

AIRPORT EXPANSION

[Why has the Palomar Airport expanded in the last 20 years from a private plane airport with no commercial flights and very little air traffic into the growing neighbor it is today?](#)

The National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) and the State of California classify Palomar Airport as a public use Primary Commercial Airport and a part of the National Transportation System. Commercial flights began at Palomar in 1991 and, at one time, the airport was serviced by three different airlines concurrently. Today, United Express, as the only scheduled airline operating at Palomar Airport, flies round trip to Los Angeles. A reported 495 planes called Palomar Airport home in 1993; today there are 286. In 1999, the Palomar Airport documented the busiest year on record with 291,873 landing and takeoff operations. In 2013, there were 160,290 operations.

[What are the future expansion plans?](#)

In August 2013, a feasibility study for potential runway and safety improvements was completed. The feasibility study will be one component of the airport's 2015-2035 Master Plan. Through the Master Plan and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, the County of San Diego and the FAA will determine if a runway extension will be part of the future airport improvements.

NOISE IMPACT NOTIFICATION AREA

[What is the Noise Impact Notification Area \(NINA\)?](#)

In 1994 — before the growth of Carlsbad encroached on the airport — the San Diego Association of Governments adopted the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) for Palomar Airport and established the airport Noise Impact Notification Area (NINA). The CLUP states: "All new residential projects located within the NINA shall be required to record a notice concerning aircraft environmental impacts, clarifying that the property is subject to overflight, sight, and sound of aircraft operating from Palomar Airport." Actual disclosures received when purchasing new homes are the responsibility of the property sellers and the County has no control regarding disclosures and explanations provided to home buyers.

When I purchased my home I was told that the disclosure that I signed was a technicality and that planes would only fly noise avoidance routes. Why are they now flying over my house?

The routes and altitudes that Palomar aircraft fly were established in 1959 by Federal Regulation when the airport was opened. These patterns in the sky are developed by the FAA to provide for safe sequencing and separation of aircraft operations and do not correspond with suggested noise abatement. There is no formal noise abatement agreement between the Airport and the surrounding residential communities.

PALOMAR AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

What is the Palomar Airport Advisory Committee?

The County Board of Supervisors established the Palomar Airport Advisory Committee (PAAC) in 1979. When formed, the primary objective of the committee was to develop a noise control plan for Palomar Airport. Since that time duties have expanded, but the primary PAAC focus continues to be advisory to the Board of Supervisors on noise concerns. Members of the PAAC are appointed by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors to review and make recommendations to the Supervisors on issues pertaining to noise, land use, development, and operations at Palomar Airport. Additionally, the PAAC provides an open forum between the communities and the County Board of Supervisors on Palomar Airport matters.

Why are only airport businesses and not the public represented on the PAAC?

Four of the current nine PAAC members represent the communities of Carlsbad, Vista, Oceanside, and San Marcos. These four members are **not** representatives of the airport businesses or the airport sponsor.

MANDATORY NOISE OR ACCESS RESTRICTIONS, FINES, AND PENALTIES

Why doesn't the county limit the use of the airport by establishing use restrictions and fines?

Palomar Airport is classified by the FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) as a public use Primary Commercial Airport which is part of the national transportation system. The airport is prohibited by federal law from establishing use restrictions, fines, and penalties. As a result of Federal grant assurances and Federal regulations the airport must remain open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. As stated in the Airport Noise and Capacity Act of 1990, proposed restrictions must be supported by substantial evidence in six areas; 1) ...the restriction is reasonable, non-arbitrary, and nondiscriminatory; 2) ...does not create an undue burden on interstate or foreign commerce; 3) is consistent with maintaining the safe and efficient utilization of the navigable airspace; 4) ...does not conflict with any existing Federal statute or regulation; 5) ...there has been adequate opportunity for public comment...; 6) ...does not create an undue burden on the national aviation system.

FLY FRIENDLY PROGRAM

What is the Fly Friendly Program?

Several years ago a PAAC subcommittee with community participation developed a Fly Friendly Program. This program provides for community outreach by PAAC members. Additionally, as part of this program, Palomar Airport staff provides local pilots with an informational program to educate and encourage them to practice noise mitigation methods when flying.

VOLUNTARY NOISE ABATEMENT PROGRAM (VNAP)

What is the Voluntary Noise Abatement Program (VNAP)?

In an effort to minimize aircraft noise impacts on the community, the County has established a Voluntary Noise Abatement Program (VNAP). The VNAP routings are recommendations to Visual Flight Rule (VFR) aircraft that were coordinated with the FAA but were not formally recognized or accepted by the FAA as official air traffic control (ATC) procedures. Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) aircraft are always under the heading and altitude command of the FAA air traffic controllers. Because noise avoidance information is a general recommendation it may not conform to ATC patterns and instructions. It is important to note that the VNAP cannot be made directive to the FAA or pilots and because of safety, traffic sequence, or weather factors, etc., the FAA air traffic control instructions and pilot requests will have precedence over the VNAP. Aircraft safety is the primary consideration for pilots and the FAA Control Tower.

[Can changes be made to the VNAP?](#)

The airport's regular review of the VNAP is coordinated with the FAA and updated as needed. In 2007, a major revision of the VNAP was completed by adding voluntary arrival suggestions to what had essentially been a single departure procedure. It is now an all-inclusive program with flight suggestions to benefit all surrounding neighborhoods and assist pilots and controllers to avoid noise sensitive areas when possible.

[Why don't pilots follow the airport's Voluntary Noise Abatement Program \(VNAP\)?](#)

Aircraft in flight within three nautical miles of the airport are under the control jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Control instructions based on pilots requests, position, weather, conflicting traffic, and direction of flight are issued by the control tower. The FAA has established rules and regulations for flight safety, separation, and sequencing of aircraft arrivals and departures. All aircraft in the vicinity of Palomar Airport are required by CFR 14, Part 91.123 b, to comply with FAA air traffic control commands and Federal regulations 24 hours a day.

[What are the voluntary "QUIET HOURS"?](#)

The first "Quiet Hours" were established in 1994 and applied to older, noisy Stage II jets. Since that beginning, the quiet hours have been amended several times. First, voluntary "Quiet Hours" were expanded to include all jets. Then, it was expanded again to include aircraft conducting practice landings and most recently with the inclusion of all propeller aircraft. In July, 2007, the VNAP program was revised to better address noise issues identified in the Noise Compatibility Study and findings of a 2006-2007 PAAC subcommittee. The Palomar Airport Quiet Hours are a sub category of the VNAP program. Propeller aircraft had never been a part of the voluntary Quiet Hours previously but are now included between 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. This revision does not change the voluntary hours for jets which remain 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (See: [NOISE OR ACCESS RESTRICTIONS](#))

[Can fines and restrictions be placed on non-participating aviators?](#)

The County makes every effort to educate pilots regarding VNAP and strongly encourages following these procedures however, fines cannot be levied in conjunction with a voluntary program and the VNAP must remain voluntary as mandated by the FAA.

NOTIFICATION AND EDUCATION

[How does the airport staff communicate local noise mitigation procedures to pilots?](#)

The airport staff makes every effort to educate pilots regarding noise abatement by providing local and transient pilots with an informational program consisting of speaker's presentations, brochures, airport signage, web sites, direct mailings, notification in manuals and at flight schools to follow the VNAP. The support of various aviation organizations, both locally and

nationally, help to educate and encourage pilots to follow the VNAP. The process of education requires a continual course of outreach to contact as many pilots using the airport as possible. Besides the Palomar based pilots, there is the potential that any of the 62,606 California resident pilots, or the many more across the nation, could fly at Palomar on any given day. The noise mitigation program is supported by various national and local aviation organizations that assist in educating and encouraging Palomar and transient pilots to avoid noise sensitive areas.

SUMMARY

Jurisdiction of the various subjects addressed above are divided between several organizations, each having authority over different aspects of aviation. The County is prohibited by the Federal Government from controlling or regulating aircraft flight operations at Palomar Airport, however airport staff receives noise complaints and compiles noise data that is available to the FAA, the California Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics, the Palomar Airport Advisory Committee (PAAC) and the community to aid land use planning, recognize trends, and support communication between the community and pilots. VNAP noise reduction information is non-directive and not allowed to compromise ATC instructions or flight safety. The County of San Diego is the owner of Palomar Airport and, under regulation by the FAA, provides for the safe operation of the airport surface facilities. While the County Airports are concerned with the safety of aviation and strive continuously to meet all safety requirements within its jurisdiction on the airport surface they do not have authority over aircraft in flight which is reserved to the FAA. The Airport and PAAC would be glad to, when invited, schedule a Palomar Airport Advisory Committee (PAAC) "Fly Friendly" noise presentation for your HOA or community group. The airport has conference space available for up to 30 participants and can occasionally conduct small, 2 people, behind the scenes tours. Please contact the airport at (760) 431-4646 for details.

WEB LINKS

County of San Diego Airports Home Page:

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/airports.html>

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Air Traffic Organization (ATO):

http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/ato/

FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO):

http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/field_offices/fsdo/san/

National Transportation Safety Board:

<http://www.nts.gov/>

Various Aviation Links:

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/airports/airlinks.html>