



Durango-La Plata County Airport Newsletter – Summer 2016

Seasonal Los Angeles Service Concludes

Seasonal nonstop service to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) on American Airlines ran from June 4th through August 20th. This period served as a “test route” for American as they evaluated the passenger demand and utilization of a third destination from the Durango-La Plata County Airport (DRO).

Airport staff will soon begin discussions with American Airlines regarding the success of the test route and how they envision a west coast hub fitting into their long term network planning strategy.

Initial figures from the DRO-LAX route show mediocre usage of the earliest flights in June, followed by steadily increasing utilization through July and August. July load factors (the percentage of seats sold) crossed the 70% threshold, which is a very positive sign for the potential viability of the route.

While the test route has completed its scheduled duration, it is important to note that American Airlines continues to operate three daily departures to both Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) on a year-round basis.

United Announces Increased Capacity

We are pleased to announce that United Airlines will operate two-cabin aircraft between Denver International Airport (DEN) and DRO for business week travel beginning Oct. 30, 2016.



The larger aircraft delivers an enhanced flying experience between Denver and Durango. United’s two-cabin aircraft offers customers a premium cabin experience in United First and includes extra legroom Economy Plus seating, personal device entertainment and United Wi-Fi connectivity.

In addition to the enhanced product offerings, two-cabin aircraft represent an increase in available seat capacity at DRO. United’s aircraft at DRO will seat a minimum of 70 passengers and will be replacing single-cabin aircraft with seating for 50 passengers that currently serve the Durango market.



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Winter Preparations

It may seem hard to believe, but airport staff are already beginning preparations for the 2016/2017 snow removal season.

Early work includes readying multiple pieces of heavy snow removal equipment, providing recurrent training to airport staff, scheduling meetings with airport tenants to discuss winter operations, and revising the airport's Snow and Ice Control Plan.



The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has recently revised the nationwide surface condition reporting process, so our staff are currently learning how to implement this new standard.

Snow removal is a technical process when it comes to the safe operation of aircraft on a runway. There is limited margin for error, and airport staff take this responsibility very seriously.

2016 Aviation Celebration

The 2016 Aviation Celebration is coming soon! On Saturday, September 17th plan for a fun and full day at the airport with the whole family!

The feature performance will be carried out through two exciting jumps by the US Army's Golden Knights Parachute Team. This team of world-class military skydivers will perform two elaborate mass jumps above the airfield and will land in close proximity to the show site.

Attendees of the Aviation Celebration will have the opportunity to purchase rides on a WWII-era aircraft. Another exciting option is to purchase a ride down the airport runway in a Ferrari or Lamborghini.

This year's event will also include static aircraft displays, activities for children, live music, door prizes, airport snow removal equipment tours, and airport firefighting equipment tours.

Attendees of all ages will enjoy seeing aircraft up close, learning about the airport, and watching the US Army parachute jump team.

Your family and friends can come experience this fun and unique event with no admission or parking costs!



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Aircraft Fueling

Aircraft arriving at and departing from DRO routinely require fuel. Aviation fuel service at our airport is currently provided by Avflight, the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) on the airfield.

Avflight maintains a fleet of mobile fuel trucks as well as an extensive “fuel farm” that can store nearly 50,000 gallons of aviation fuel. Two types of fuel are used in the aviation industry today. Aviation gasoline (Avgas) is utilized by aircraft equipped with internal combustion engines, while Jet Fuel is utilized by aircraft with turbine engines.



In 2015, over 46,000 gallons of Avgas were pumped at DRO. This type of fuel is typically used by smaller aircraft being operated by individual owners.

In 2015, nearly 1.8 million gallons of Jet Fuel were pumped at DRO. This type of fuel is used by both jet and turboprop aircraft. The airlines accounted for approximately 72% of this total, while the remainder was used by military, private, or commercial non-airline aircraft.

Go Where Your Bags Go Tours

The airport conducts “Go Where Your Bags Go” tours on the first Thursday of every month.

While on the tour, you will see first-hand how the airport facilities are challenged to keep pace with the growing airline operations at DRO. Additionally you will get a behind-the-scenes look at how the airlines process a commercial flight.



To sign up for a tour, go to the airport website (flydurango.com) and click the link shown above.

On a related note, if you know of any school or community groups that might be interested in either the “Go Where Your Bags Go” tour or a separate tour of the airport’s snow removal and firefighting equipment, please have them contact us at 970-382-6051 or airport@durangogov.org.



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Employee Spotlight

Brad Riddle, ARFF

By Barb Powers, Administration Office
Durango-La Plata County Airport

One of our many busy employees is Brad Riddle, in the department fondly referred to as ARFF. What is ARFF, you may ask? No, it's not a dog-training facility. Brad is in Airport Operations/ARFF, which means he is a professional Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighter, here at the Durango-La Plata County Airport.

Brad came to Durango five years ago, all the way from Vermont. While attending school at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, he studied Aviation Science and Management. He first started working for the Airlines and was an Operations Supervisor for American Airlines. He now has been in his current position for 16 months.

The wide variety of responsibilities keeps Brad busy and excited about his job. As he pointed out, working at a smaller airport allows for more opportunity to get involved in areas he may not normally have been assigned. Some of his duties include responding to medical and other emergencies, manning the fire trucks, training new employees in safety, maintaining security systems, and handling parking issues. It would probably take several more pages to list everything he actually does in the course of a day.



Last April, Brad had a real eye-opener when ARFF coordinated a major disaster training exercise at the airport, something he had not yet experienced. This is required by the FAA every three years. ARFF was responsible for planning the event, reaching out to all the area first-responder agencies to participate, including area fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and more. An Air Force C130 aircraft was even brought in for the exercise. Brad said it was extremely involved and somewhat overwhelming when he saw what it took to coordinate all those agencies in the event of a major emergency. He attended meetings afterward as they discussed how it was handled, and worked on areas to improve.

When Brad isn't busy wearing one of his many hats here, he enjoys letting off steam by spending a lot of time in the mountains. While Vermont boasts some beautiful scenery, nothing beats the Colorado Rockies for high-altitude fun. Brad spends his spare time exploring via mountain bike, on foot, and skiing a lot in the winter. He returns to the east coast a couple of times a year to visit his parents and his sister, who lives in New York.