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Thursday, July 21, 2005

## DeKalb airport needs better snow removal system

*By Bill Gisel*

AUBURN — The installation of an instrument landing system (ILS) at the DeKalb County Airport is putting a greater emphasis on snow removal, according to airport manager Russ Couchman.

In a report to the Board of Aviation Commissioners Tuesday, Couchman recommended the airport pursue the purchase of equipment to sweep and blow snow off the airport's runway, taxiways and main ramp at a rate that complies with federal aviation requirements.

"We have gone from being a fair-weather airport to an all-weather airport," Couchman explained. "We can now expect aircraft to be landing during snowstorms and in some very bad visibility."

The FAA requires an airport with an ILS and between 10,000 and 40,000 flight operations a year to be able to remove 1 inch of snow from its main runway, taxiways and main terminal ramp within three hours, according to Couchman. The DeKalb airport has more than 10,000 operations a year.

At present, the airport has only a pickup truck with a 8-foot blade to remove snow. Couchman said he favors purchasing a broom and blower that can clear the pavement to the bare surface and at the same time blow the snow past runway lighting.

The device would be pulled behind a dump truck, he said.

Proceeds of the airport's pending \$2 million bond sale would pay for the snow removal equipment, Couchman recommends. The broom and blower system has an estimated cost of about \$130,000.

Couchman said the airport will buy a dump truck retired by the county highway department for \$13,000.

The board authorized Couchman to proceed with a request for bids, pending the approval of



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the bonds. The bond sale has not yet been approved by the state Department of Local Government Finance.

In other matters, Couchman reported that:

- The airport will be getting Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) from the FAA to be used with the ILS system. The DME originally was specified as a part of the system but had been deleted by the FAA, which paid for the ILS system. Couchman said the news was welcomed by corporate aviation pilots using the airport. The DME can provide pilots with the exact distance from the aircraft to the end of the runway as an aircraft makes its instrument approach. Without the DME, pilots have only vertical and horizontal points of reference and the distance from the outer marker to the runway.

- The DeKalb County Airport ranks ninth in airport operations compared with 17 other airports in northeastern Indiana, ahead of both Angola and Marion. The ranking is based on acoustical counts compiled by the FAA.

- The number of aircraft based at the DeKalb airport has increased at a rate greater than the other 98 public use airports in the state. Couchman said the construction of three new T-hangars and the Golf Papa corporate jet facility are responsible for much of the growth.

Couchman said weather and the economy most affect an airport's operation, but fuel sales and operations are showing steady growth since a significant drop following the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

- A Purdue University wildlife study team has placed cameras and conducted day and night surveys of wildlife and habitat. The airport is paying \$5,000 to learn what habitat is on the airport and how it attracts wildlife, and for recommendations on how to minimize the presence of animals such as deer and raccoon and also large birds.

- The aviation commissioners opened bids for the construction of a new ramp for the expanding Rieke Corp. aviation operation. The bids were taken under advisement.

Bidders and the amounts were Kinder and Sons, \$78,122; Brooks Construction, \$86,899; Schenkel and Sons, \$88,551; and Primco, \$149,029.

Construction of a new hangar began July 11. Rieke is investing about \$300,000 to build a second hangar at the airport.

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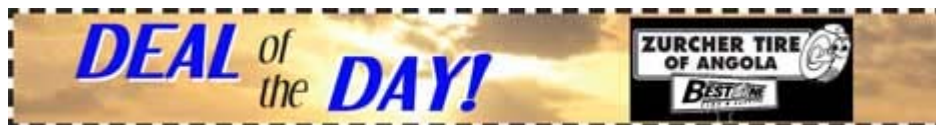
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