

Tualatin Valley Livability Newsletter

Preserving, Protecting, and Promoting the Livability of Washington County's Communities

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Helicopters: Hillsboro Airport Neighbors Fight Back

To date community members have gathered more than 700 signatures from area residents who are negatively impacted by aircraft noise.

By Delilah Ahrendt

What are the Bravo, Alpha and Charlie patterns? The Bravo and Alpha Patterns are helicopter training airspaces east and west of the Hillsboro Airport that are already in use. These airspaces are located over homes and multi-million dollar businesses. The Charlie pattern is another airspace that is scheduled to be put into place within the next two months. The Charlie pattern is located above residential and future industrial sites. Although the Hillsboro Aviation School claims the Charlie pattern will bring some relief to the Alpha pattern from the helicopter training and the incredible amount of noise it brings, Bravo and Charlie will be more heavily used to balance out what won't be used in the Alpha pattern.

All three of these airspace patterns allow helicopter students to 'train' over our communities without curfews, without altitude restrictions and without noise regulations. Helicopter training takes place over our communities 24/7, day and night, including holidays. Hillsboro Aviation prides itself on training whenever their clients want to train, even during low visibility conditions.

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Aviation Safety

Fixed Wing and Helicopter Flight Training along with general aviation operations pose significant risk to area residents.

A National Transportation and Security Board website (www.nts.gov) search of air traffic accidents in Hillsboro between 1987 and the present yielded 43 matches. The combined total for the nearby towns of Scappoose (12), North Plains (8), Forest Grove (4), Banks (1), and Cornelius (2) was 27. If the accident reports from Portland (23) Troutdale (15) and Mulino (6) are included the total comes to 114. Portland International Airport as well as Hillsboro, Troutdale and Mulino airports are owned and operated by the Port of Portland. The majority of the accidents at all of the above mentioned sites were related to fixed wing aircraft. The focus of this article will be on the accidents that occurred in Hillsboro during the timeframe mentioned above.

The NTSB uses the term 'accident' to refer to an event that caused personal injury or that damaged the aircraft. 'Incidents,' such as emergency landings on non-airport property that do not cause personal injury or damage to the aircraft, are not recorded at the NTSB site. Mike Harris at the Federal

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How To Contact TVLC

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Tualatin Valley Livability
Newsletter
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Where to Log Noise Complaints

To log aviation noise complaints, contact the Port of Portland's Noise Office (503) 460-4100 or www.portofportlandor.com (click on noise management). Port Noise Office Manager, Peggy McNees can be reached at (503) 460-4023. You can also contact your elected officials, including: the Hillsboro Mayor (503) 681-6219 and City Council Members, Washington County Commissioners (503) 846-8681, State legislators, the Governor (503) 378-3111 and your Congressional delegation - Federal Switchboard (202) 224-3121. ♦

Helicopter Noise

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According to the Port of Portland there are approximately 142 days out of the year with impaired visibility for flight. Yet in 2003, 45% of the more than 238,000 operations flying in and out of the Hillsboro Airport were helicopters. Relentless noise aside, helicopters are ten times more likely to crash than airliners. And yet the Port of Portland allows these helicopters to 'train' over homes as well as multi-million dollar businesses with lethal chemical facilities on the premises (IDT, Intel, TriQuint).

Trainees of the helicopter school must do a certain amount of air flight with an instructor at their side. However, they are also required to do a significant amount of 'solo' time in the air, which means there are inexperienced pilots flying over homes and businesses 24 hours a day, seven days a week!

The National Transportation and Safety Board aircraft accident database lists several forced aircraft landings onto local Hillsboro farmland. Some were due to pilot failure to check something as simple as their gas tanks. Why are we silently dealing with the noise while also waiting for tragedy to strike? Enough is enough. We are looking to make a community, business and city effort to move all helicopter training to a more appropriate area where the dangers of training would be significantly reduced for residents and businesses as well as those in training.

Hillsboro Aviation has grown into the second largest helicopter school in the nation while repeatedly griping that the limited amount of airspace prohibits their growth. We therefore see the moving of the school as a solution for all parties involved and would like your help. **We are not proposing to remove Life Flight. We simply want experienced pilots in the airspaces above us.** One small airport has already stepped forward and is willing to take the school in. They desperately need the business and training would not take place over communities. If you have any questions or comments or would like to help this cause, please email Delilah at Delilah@delilahahrendt.com. Her web address is www.delilahahrendt.com. ♦

Noise and Home Values

Airport noise significantly decreases property values.

*By Stephen O. Frazier, Email: cqe-abq@juno.com
(This article was first published 2/24/02. It appears here with the permission of the author.)*

Most people, at one time or another, have been disturbed in their homes by excessive noise. Sometimes a

noisy neighbor or a boom car going by. Sometimes by a nearby business with outdoor loud-speakers. If it happens occasionally, we just live with it. If it happens repeatedly, we complain about it and try to get the noise stopped.

Mayor Rudolph Guiliani, in New York, set up a quality of life hotline for people to report various problems in their neighborhoods. The January 15, 2002 edition of the New York Times reported, "Last year, more than 80 percent of the calls to the (Mayor's) quality-of-life hotline were about noise, while fewer than 2 percent were about the problems monitored in Operation Clean Sweep: public drinking and drug use, squeegee operations, public urination, aggressive panhandling, prostitution, disorderly conduct by homeless people, illegal peddling."

What many people plagued by noise pollution don't realize is that it's not just affecting their quality of life, it's impacting the value of their home. Research has shown that homes subject to new sources of excessive noise pollution can be devalued by up to forty percent.

An article by Randall Bell, MAI, that was published in the July, 2001 Appraisal Journal indicates that appraisers include what they term "Diminution of Value" that factors in devaluation of property that is subject to excessive noise from sources located off of the property. An example cited was expansion of the Baltimore/Washington International airport where some moderately priced homes in the area incurred a \$60,873 loss in value due to increased aircraft noise.

An article in the Feb/Mar 1993 issue of The Neighborhood Works assigned a specific dollar value to loss incurred by each decibel increase in noise above a quiet threshold that was caused by traffic noise. A California study assigned a percentage relating noise to value and found, "an average 18.6% higher property value in the quiet neighborhood, or 1.33% per decibel of additional quiet." In a "paired sales analysis" whereby paired sets of data were examined on the sale of comparable single family homes in the Los Angeles area, the impact of noise pollution decreased home values in a range from 15% to over 42%, with the average being 27.4%. For people who have purchased property in a quiet setting that, because of development or other factors, is subjected to new sources of noise pollution, they can find that their property has been devalued to the point that they could not get even their equity out of the property were they to attempt to sell it.

If the ambient nighttime sound level in a neighborhood was at the EPA and World Health Organization recom-

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Aviation Safety*Continued from page 1*

Aviation Administration (FAA) Flight Standards Office said that access to incident reports requires a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) letter of request to the FAA.

Of the 43 Hillsboro matches, 42 were categorized as general aviation, one as agricultural. Seventeen of the general aviation events occurred with aircraft that intended to depart, land or train at Hillsboro Airport, ten took place during approaches, departures or training operations at Stark's Twin Oaks, a privately owned airpark located approximately 4 miles from Hillsboro. Fourteen of the 15 accident reports from 1987 through 1992, did not clearly indicate which airport the aircraft was departing towards or arriving from nor did they clearly indicate whether or not the pilot was a student. Unless clearly identified as a student, the pilots are categorized as private pilots. One report involved both facilities in that the pilot had intended to land at the Hillsboro Airport but landed at Stark's Twin Oaks instead due to inability to make contact with the Hillsboro Tower. (See table on pages 5 and 6 for listing of accidents.)

The majority of the Hillsboro accidents, thirty two, were related to fixed wing aircraft. Of this number, 10 occurred during instructional flights or during solo student flights. The remaining fixed wing flights were operated by private pilots with one exception. In March of 1989 two teenagers broke into a locked hangar and took a Cessna on a joy ride. In this instance, no injuries were incurred. Eleven of the general aviation accident reports were helicopter related, seven of which were instructional or student-as-sole-occupant flights.

A review of the numbers suggests that more than 75% of the accidents occurred with fixed wing aircraft and just under 25% with helicopters. Sixteen, 38%, occurred during flight instruction or during student solo flights. Also of note are the eleven emergency landings that occurred off airport property. One particular flight that originated from Hillsboro Airport was forced to land at Ross Island due to mechanical problems. Several forced landings occurred in open fields in some cases due to the failure of the pilot to check fuel supplies. On 6/9/98 a pilot and his wife perished when attempting to land at the Hillsboro Airport after their Cessna lost engine power and crashed into power lines and trees in a ravine near some light rail tracks.

This issue of forced landings on non-airport property is of major concern. Between 1990 and 2001 the population in Washington County increased by 46%. During this same time period the population in Hillsboro, now

the 6th largest city in Oregon, nearly doubled. The risk of harm to residents on the ground significantly increases as dense housing developments and industrial lands continue to be built in areas close to airports.

An article entitled [Just How Dangerous Are Helicopters, Anyway?](http://safecopter/arc.nasa.gov) by Joe Di Maio (<http://safecopter/arc.nasa.gov>) states that accidents are about ten times more likely for both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft than for airliners. According to the author:

“Personal and instructional flying account for the bulk of [helicopter] accidents and these are done mostly in low cost helicopters...Personal pilots and students make up the least experienced part of the pilot population, and personal pilots are the most inclined to neglect safety rules and recommendations.”

The higher accident rate of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters poses a greater risk to the community than a commercial facility such as Portland International Airport (PDX). The NTSB accident report search for PDX during the same timeframe yielded 23 reports, 10 of which were either fixed wing or helicopter related. One of the fixed wing accidents resulted in two fatalities. Pilot inexperience was cited as a contributing factor.

There is a significant danger in locating the largest general aviation airport and flight training school in the state in the second most populated county in Oregon. The situation is further complicated by the placement of both Portland International Airport and Hillsboro Airport flight tracks and training patterns over Washington County residents which further serves to increase the likelihood that pilot error or mechanical malfunction could lead to unforeseen tragedy. What is particularly troubling is that those who have been put in harm's way have been denied a voice in the decision making process.

The time has come for the Port, the FAA, the Governor, Hillsboro Airport, Portland Community College (PCC's Aviation Science Department partners with Hillsboro Aviation for the provision of fixed wing and helicopter training), and our elected officials to stop jeopardizing the well-being of people in this county by ignoring legitimate safety concerns and by adhering to a decision making process that places a higher value on monetary gain than the common good of the community. Residents are becoming increasingly alienated by government and educational institutions that use taxpayer monies to degrade the environment and to compromise safety. A citizen oversight board needs to be put into place to monitor the Port and the aviation industry and to insure that airport safety, noise, and environmental standards are established. ♦

Hillsboro Aviation Should Move

Helicopter Training School Does Not Belong

By Todd Balsiger

(This article was initially published as a letter to the editor on 3/11/04 in response to an 3/03/04 Oregonian article by columnist Jerry Boone entitled "The buzz on the buzz at the airport".)

Thank you Jerry Boone for shedding light on how the second largest helicopter training school in the U.S. impacts our community here in Hillsboro. I sit this morning watching technicians belatedly hook up one of four noise monitors. A helicopter passes overhead and all three technicians look-up simultaneously and I know what they are thinking. I have seen other people come to our neighborhood and shake their heads and ask, "Do they always fly like that". I sheepishly nod "yes". How can you stand it they ask? I don't answer this, but I do say when I purchased my home in 1997 that they didn't fly nearly as much as they do now since Max Lyons purchased the helicopter school.

Boone discusses the decision by Hillsboro's city council to allow a new development underneath the Bravo pattern and that this will generate more complaints. I agree, especially considering that most of the petition signers (we mostly collected signatures from the Bravo area) are not under the training pattern. You see if you dropped a plumb bob under the helicopters you'd find that they mostly fly adjacent and parallel to our community and not absolutely directly over us. Apparently we shouldn't have a problem since they don't fly over us. It's a matter of semantics -- never mind that occasionally our windows, light fixtures, and chandeliers shake.

Boone also conveyed that adding the Charlie pattern would bring relief. This is half true and definitely false for the Bravo community. Max Lyons has tentatively promised 80% flight reductions over Alpha and zero flight reductions over Bravo because, after all, they don't fly over us. And what of the residents who live under the Charlie pattern?

I recognize the economic benefits of the helicopter training school, and that it helps diversify our economy, but the costs haven't been addressed. I frankly think that Hillsboro Aviation's helicopter school is giving the Hillsboro airport a black eye and that it simply doesn't fit into our community. These helicopters are mobile; they can train their clients over unpopulated areas.

Boone conveyed that Hillsboro Aviation is being pressured to train more foreign students! There were roughly 85,000 helicopter-training flights over our homes in 2003 as reported in the last Hillsboro Airport

Master Planning meeting. I personally would rather have Hillsboro known as the Silicon Forest than the largest helicopter training school in the U.S.

Lastly, Boone quoted Max Lyons as saying they're growing because other helicopter schools are closing because of the soft economy. I think this statement is half true. I think other helicopter schools are closing because of the soft economy AND because other communities have placed limits or banned helicopter training. And because there currently are no restrictions limiting hours of operation, days they can fly, etc. Lyon's helicopter school is flourishing. The City of Hillsboro and the community here should address this issue like most other cities and communities have across the nation. We are lagging far behind the pack and our kids and families are paying for it. ♦

Home Values

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mended level of 45 decibels and, because of new noise sources entering the neighborhood, that ambient level became 60 decibels, based on the above studies, homes could depreciate between 7% for a moderately priced home to 20% for a higher priced home.

Noise pollution caused by aircraft noise and traffic are the two sources that impact the largest number of people, so they have been the most heavily studied and reported on. Some (but not all) of the data cited here is based on those studies. Even when that was the source, the reports contained other facts applicable to all forms of noise pollution. An example is the finding of the Orange County Health Department that indicated people in urban, residential settings would tolerate no higher than 45 to 55 decibel neighborhood noise levels during the day without complaint. At night, those outdoor levels are 35 to 45 decibels. When those levels rose by 5 decibels, sporadic complaints were reported while, when they rose 10 decibels, the department reported "widespread complaint."

It's not unreasonable to assume that noise from other sources such as amplified sound from nearby businesses or even noisy neighbors that is ongoing for long periods can have an impact not all that different from other noise sources. One local example Citizen's for a Quiet Environment, Inc. (CQE) is aware of is a home that was sold at a loss by a CQE supporter to get away from boom box noise at the TVI facility in Northeast Albuquerque. Another is a condominium listed twice at a lower price than was paid for it after noisy neighbors moved into the complex. Neither listing was successful in selling the property. To protect not only their health, but their investment in their homes, it is critical that people listen when they're advised. Please.....don't keep quiet about noise!" ♦

NTSB Accident Reports

This is a summary of the accident reports referred to in the Aviation Safety article beginning on page one. For additional information, the accident reports referred to in this table can be found at the National Transportation and Safety Board website www.ntsb.org. Hillsboro Airport is owned and operated by the Port of Portland. Twin Oaks refers to Stark's Twin Oaks Airpark, a privately owned facility located approximately 4 miles from Hillsboro. Hillsboro Aviation provides flight training for both fixed wing and helicopter students. Its former name was Hillsboro Helicopters. The accident reports between 1987 and 1992 did not always specify the name of the airport or the name of the individual or company to whom the aircraft was registered. The Off-Airport Landing column refers to aircraft that due to pilot error or inexperience, mechanical failure, inadequate gas supply, or other extenuating circumstances, were required to make an unanticipated forced landing onto non-airport property.

National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) Aviation Accident Reports Hillsboro, OR. 1987 to present

Date	Aircraft Type	Airport (if recorded)	Registered to	Flown by	Persons Injured	Off-Airport Landing
02/28/04	Jerome Q-2	Hillsboro	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	0	
10/26/03	Hughes Helicopter 269C	Twin Oaks and Hillsboro	Commercial Flight Instructor	Flight Instructor and pilot under instruction	0	
09/01/03	Pitts S-2A	Twin Oaks	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	1 minor	
06/14/02	Cessna 152	Hillsboro	Hillsboro Aviation	Student – 1 st solo flight	0	
10/08/00	WSK-PZL	Twin Oaks	Transport pilot	Transport pilot	2 minor	
08/09/00	Cessna 152	Hillsboro	Hillsboro Aviation	Flight instructor and student	1 serious 1 minor	
06/09/00	Cessna 182H	Twin Oaks	Twin Oaks	Private Pilot	2 minor	
04/30/00	Piper PA-28	Twin Oaks	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	0	
09/09/99	Piper PA-23	Twin Oaks	Scholls Oaks LLC	Flight Instructor and Student	1 minor	Yes
05/23/99	Piper PA-24-180	Hillsboro	Private passenger	Pilot-in-command and flight instructor	0	
04/17/99	Beech 35-C33	Hillsboro		Private pilot	0	
02/20/99	Cessna 150L	Twin Oaks	Twin Oaks Airpark	Student	0	
01/05/99	Robinson Helicopter R-22	Hillsboro	Hillsboro Aviation	Student (sole occupant)	0	
08/13/98	Cessna 7337E	Hillsboro	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	1 minor	
06/09/98	Cessna 7210N	Hillsboro	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	2 fatalities	Yes
04/01/98	Beech 35-C33	Hillsboro	Private Flying Club	Flight Instructor and student	0	
02/05/98	Bromley Steen Skybolt	Twin Oaks	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	1 minor	
08/13/97	Cessna 140	Hillsboro	Private Owner	Private Pilot	0	
06/16/97	Beech N35	Twin Oaks		Commercial Pilot	0	
07/08/96	Piper PA-46-35	Hillsboro	Corporate Owner	Private Pilot	0	
06/15/96	Piper PA-24-250	Twin Oaks	Private Pilot	Private Pilot and Flight Instructor	0	
02/27/96	Cessna 180A	Hillsboro	Private Pilot	Private Pilot	0	
05/23/95	Robinson Helicopter R-22	Hillsboro	Hillsboro Helicopters	Student (sole occupant)	0	
03/12/95	Robinson Helicopter R-22	Hillsboro	Hillsboro Helicopters	Flight Instructor and Student	0	
01/21/95	Cessna A185E	Twin Oaks		Private Pilot	0	Yes
07/07/94	Robinson Helicopter R22M			Flight Instructor and Student	2 minor	Yes

Date	Aircraft Type	Airport (if recorded)	Registered to	Flown by	Persons Injured	Off-Airport Landing
06/20/94	Schweizer Helicopter 269C	Hillsboro	Operated by Hillsboro Helicopters	Pilot-in-command and Student	0	
04/29/94	Cessna	Hillsboro		Student solo flight	0	
10/01/92	Hughes Helicopter 269C			Pilot had only 9 hrs. of rotorcraft time of which 3.5 were solo.		
05/01/92	Hughes Helicopter 369E			Private Pilot – Practice Autorotation	0	
10/11/91	Hughes Helicopter 269B			Private pilot attempting to knock hazelnuts off trees with rotor wash.	0	Yes
09/16/91	Cessna 150M			Student solo flight	1 minor	Yes
07/31/91	Cessna 150M			Private Pilot	0	Yes
07/27/91	Beech N35			Private Pilot	0	Yes
04/05/90	Stinson 108-2			Private Pilot	0	
04/02/90	Bell Helicopter 47G-3B-2	Agricultural		Private Pilot	1 serious	Yes
11/13/89	Cessna 182P			Private Pilot	0	
11/12/89	Piper PA-28-180			Private Pilot		Yes
09/14/89	Robinson Helicopter R22			Flight Instructor and Student	1 serious 1 minor	
03/16/89	Cessna 150E			2 teenagers, no training	0	
09/29/88	Cessna 185F			Private Pilot	0	
08/20/89	Cessna 185			Private Pilot	0	Yes
04/24/89	Cessna 172M	Hillsboro		Private Pilot	1 serious	