Winter Haven Municipal Airport – Gilbert Field

December 2012 Safety Reminders

Flying stories abound at all airports and often the events become misconstrued or embellished as they are passed from one pilot to the next. However, there were *three* events that happened *in one day* at the Winter Haven Airport that were reported by the pilots involved. These events highlight the need for a review of Operations at Non-Towered (also known as Uncontrolled) Airports such as Winter Haven. Let's review two of these events, the potential hazards, and the guidance that governs our flying operations. The goal is to be aware of the potential risks that unexpected events pose to all of us and to encourage all operators to adhere to the regulations, recommended procedures, and safety practices that are published here for easy reference.

Pilots that fail to follow regulations and recommended practices are a hazard to themselves and others. Regulations and recommended procedures came about in response to hazardous behaviors that often resulted in death. Pilots that fail to exercise common courtesy are also a hazard to the safety as well as the reputation of our airport. Let's all work together to fly friendly and fly informed.

Event #1 – The instructor pilot of an aircraft reported that he had called departing Runway 5 at Winter Haven as he taxied onto the runway for take-off. As he lined up on the runway, he heard another pilot call that he was departing Runway 5. The pilot of the first aircraft on the runway had already begun his takeoff roll, and was surprised to see another aircraft taxiing toward him. Not being sure what the aircraft joining him on the runway was going to do, he chose to continue his take-off. Just after rotation, he looked to his right (he was in the right seat) to see the other aircraft airborne and climbing out just below and beside his plane.

Potential Hazard of Event #1 – Any unexpected event, such as another aircraft entering the runway while you are preparing to depart can cause an interruption of procedures and distract you from your task of taking-off. Due to this hazard and to manage the risks of flying, regulations and advisory materials address such maneuvers.

Guidance to Mitigate Hazard #1 – The regulations and suggested procedures that address entering an occupied runway and flying in close proximity to another aircraft include:

14 CFR § 91.111   Operating near other aircraft:

(a) No person may operate an aircraft so close to another aircraft as to create a collision hazard.

(b) No person may operate an aircraft in formation flight except by arrangement with the pilot in command of each aircraft in the formation.

(c) No person may operate an aircraft, carrying passengers for hire, in formation flight.

AOPA Air Safety Foundation Operations at Nontowered Airports:

This publication provides an excellent review of the recommended procedures for safe operations at nontowered airports. This "Safety Advisor" can be found at:

http://www.aopa.org/asf/publications/sa08.pdf

FAA Advisory Circular 90-66A Traffic Advisory Practices at Airports without Operating Control Towers tells about "good operating practices and procedures for use when approaching or departing airports without an operating control tower and airports that have control towers operating part time. It can be found at:

http://rgl.faa.gov/REGULATORY_AND_GUIDANCE_LIBRARY/RGADVISORYCIRCULAR.NSF/0/74c9017c9457e4ab862569d800780551/$FILE/AC90-66A.pdf

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From NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System:

http://asrs.arc.nasa.gov/docs/cb/cb_314.pdf

Chapter 4 from the Aeronautical Information Manual:

http://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/atpubs/aim/aim0401.html#aim0401.html.2

Event #2 – An instructor and student were practicing an instrument approach to Runway 11 at Winter Haven. The student chose to break off the approach and enter the upwind (not the departure path) about two miles from the end of the runway to join the pattern as he had heard traffic calling inbound to Winter Haven. At that time, a pilot calls that they are entering a *right* downwind to Runway 11 at Winter Haven. The pilot entering the upwind asked for a clarification that the other pilot was on a right downwind. Upon confirmation, he informed the other pilot that Winter Haven is left traffic for all runways. She then said she would alter course to left traffic, but an unknown voice said "that's okay, come on in." At that time the pilot on the upwind had her in sight and altered course to avoid a conflict.

Potential Hazard of Event #2 – Recommended practices (AOPA) Safety Advisor and Aeronautical Information Manual suggest that instead of making a straight in approach, to alter course to the right (in a standard left hand traffic pattern) and enter the upwind. If traffic is in right traffic, there is a grave potential for a midair collision.

Guidance to Mitigate Hazard #2 – The regulations and guidance that address procedures to prevent midair collisions and improve see and avoid at non-towered airports include all of the guidance above and:

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§ 91.126   Operating on or in the vicinity of an airport in Class G airspace:

(a) *General.* Unless otherwise authorized or required, each person operating an aircraft on or in the vicinity of an airport in a Class G airspace area must comply with the requirements of this section.
(b) *Direction of turns.* When approaching to land at an airport without an operating control tower in Class G airspace—
(1) Each pilot of an airplane must make all turns of that airplane to the left unless the airport displays approved light signals or visual markings indicating that turns should be made to the right, in which case the pilot must make all turns to the right; and
(2) Each pilot of a helicopter or a powered parachute must avoid the flow of fixed-wing aircraft.

Winter Haven Airport Safety Summary

1. Land on the runway most closely aligned with the wind. When wind is *less than* five (5) knots as reported on the KGIF ASOS, the preferred runway is Runway 5. Note: If true conditions indicate otherwise (windsock, flags, lakes, etc.) use appropriate runway. If cross-wind landings are being practiced, please advise other traffic by including it on your *regular* CTAF reports.

2. CTAF – review the Aeronautical Information Manual (Section 4-1-9) for appropriate use of CTAF. Minimize unnecessary conversations on the frequency.

3. When there is a conflict of "runway in use", request "advisories" from Unicom (123.05).

4. Please review operations at non-towered airports as listed above and displayed below.

The **final approach leg** is a flight path in the direction of landing along the extended runway centerline from the base leg to the runway.

The **base leg** is a flight path at right angles to the landing runway off its approach end and extending from the downwind leg to the intersection of the final approach leg.

The **downwind leg** is a flight path parallel to the landing runway in the opposite direction of landing. Because landings are made into the wind, the downwind leg is flown with the wind.

The **departure leg** is a flight path aligned with and leading from the takeoff runway. The departure leg begins at the point the airplane leaves the ground and continues straight out or until the 90-degree turn onto the crosswind leg. Although inconsistent with the AIM, this leg is often called the **upwind leg.**

The normal pattern entry is at 45° to the downwind leg, midfield at pattern altitude.

The **upwind leg** is a flight path parallel to the landing runway, into the wind, on the opposite side of the pattern of the downwind leg.

The **crosswind leg** is a flight path at a right angle to the landing runway off its takeoff end. It is opposite the base leg.

Windsock
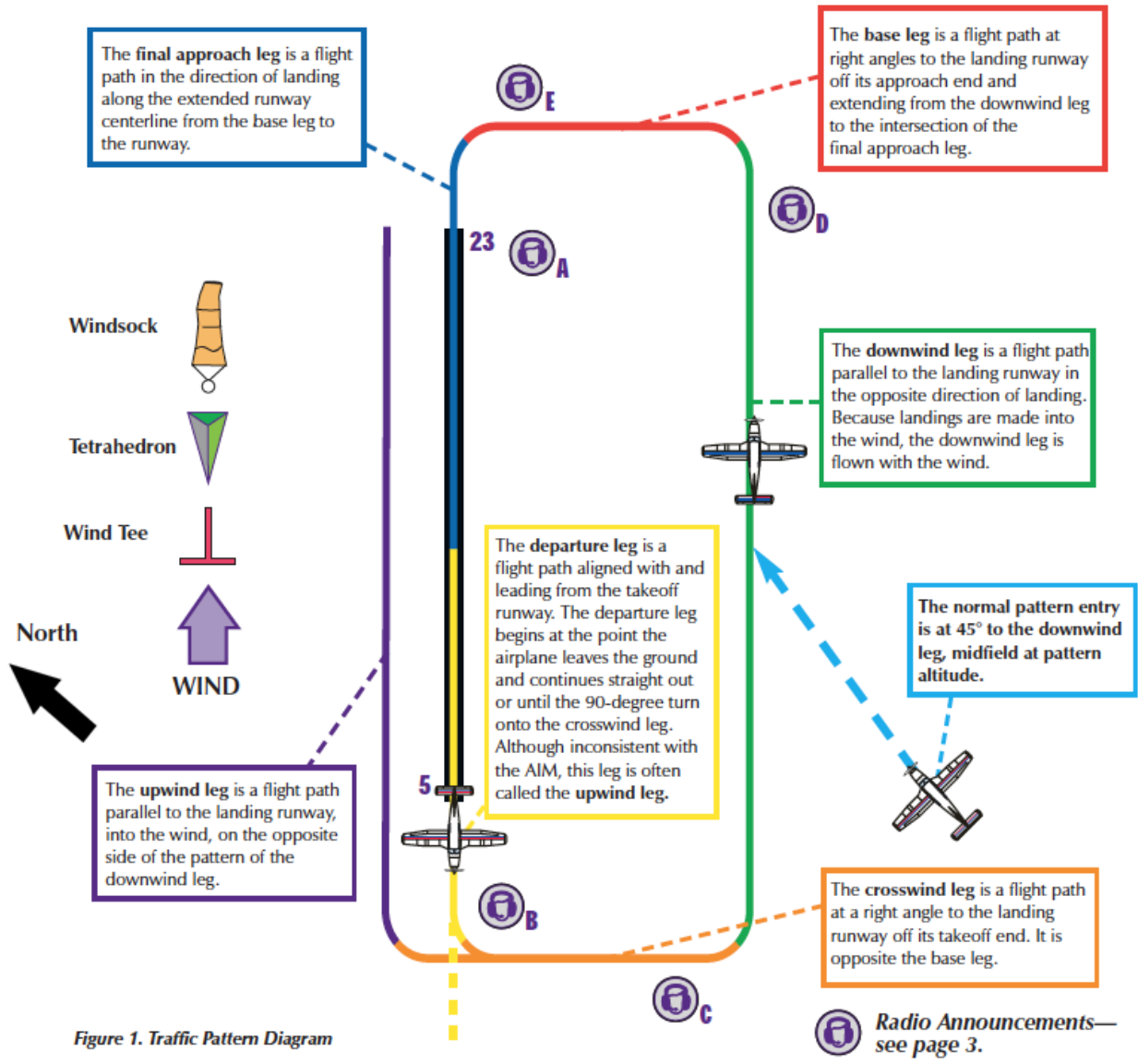
Tetrahedron

Wind Tee

North

WIND

Radio Announcements— see page 3.

Figure 1. Traffic Pattern Diagram

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