

What is General Aviation?



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The simple answer:

General aviation is all civilian flying except scheduled passenger airlines.

As simple as that?

Yes. And as complex as that. General aviation includes flying as diverse as overnight package delivery and a weekend visit back home; as different as emergency medical evacuation and inspection trips to remote construction sites; as complementary as aerial application to keep crops healthy and airborne law enforcement to keep the peace. Just for starters.

General aviation benefits the community in so many ways it's hard to cover them all. We scan a few on the following pages.



An estimated 65% of general aviation flights are conducted for business and public services that need transportation more flexible than the airlines can offer. That flexibility can be a hometown businessman flying his own small airplane to see four clients on a one-day, 700-mile circuit, or it can be a CEO and five staff members working at 30,000 feet while en route to a major meeting. By scheduled airline, the first could take four days and three hotel bills; the second would be impossible.

Like the family automobile, the family airplane (owned or rented) can provide mobility and pleasure, and it's almost always a more enjoyable trip by air. The family airplane can triple the comfortable range of vacation travel while avoiding the stress and frustrations of heavy traffic. And, of course, the family breadwinners can use the same airplane to great advantage in business by virtue of its speed and flexibility.

A common misconception leads some to think of personal

In these and so many other ways,

Aviation?

or small business aircraft as only for the extremely wealthy. In fact, many people of middle-class means fly airplanes less costly to acquire than a new family car.

And learning to fly general aviation aircraft is well within the capabilities of the average person, intellectually and physically. Even some disabilities – deafness, for instance – need



not keep a person who really wants to fly out of the cockpit.

General aviation has an excellent and steadily improving safety record. Since the big surge in private and business flying that followed WWII, the total accident rate has decreased by 90% – down to just seven accidents per 100,000 flight hours. (To lend some perspective to that figure: the average general aviation flight lasts less than an hour. In 2000, general aviation's estimated 40 million flights

totaled some 30 million flight hours and constituted 77% of all flights in the United States.)

Ninety-five percent of the roughly 210,000 civil aircraft registered in the United States are general aviation aircraft. And of the nation's more than 625,000 pilots, an estimated 500,000+ fly general aviation airplanes. More than 400,000 of them are members of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. (Incidentally, many airline pilots also fly general aviation aircraft – for pleasure!)

The great fleet of general aviation aircraft is the mainspring of a \$20 billion a year industry which generates more than \$102 billion in economic activity. Thousands of communities benefit as their airports create a positive ripple effect in the local economy. Their business people take advantage of rapid, on-demand air transportation, and the airports help attract corporations that would never locate a plant, headquarters or distribution center in a town without an airport.

general aviation serves the people!



General Aviation Saves Lives

Every day, general aviation transports blood supplies,

vital transplant organs, and other time-critical, life-saving elements. Air ambulances carry out medevac rescues and provide urgent transportation to trauma and other emergency centers. Many pilots volunteer their services (and often the use of their own aircraft) to transport patients who can not endure land travel to distant specialized treatment centers. Local volunteer pilot organizations provide such services at no cost to needy patients.

Helicopter emergency medical evacuation is nearly doubling survival rates by getting accident victims to hospitals within the first critical "Golden Hour."

For Business And Personal Transportation, General Aviation Offers Speed And Flexibility

More and more people are discovering that general aviation is fast, efficient and safe, opening a whole new vista of travel opportunities. For both business and personal travel, general aviation means going *where* one wants to go (not just where the airlines go), *when* one wants to go (free from airline schedules), and in whatever degree of privacy one desires.

The payoff is greater transportation flexibility and productivity than any other mode of travel can provide.

But even those who never seize these advantages benefit, because general aviation works *for the community*, fostering the economy and providing essential services.



General Aviation Protects Our Environment

The most efficient and cost-effective way to conduct wildlife surveys, map wetland losses and soil erosion, fol-



low bird migrations, patrol parklands and detect pipeline spills is with general aviation aircraft.

Specially equipped government and private aircraft gather information vital to the work of wildlife specialists, park rangers, prospectors, environmentalists and others.

General aviation has

long been our forward line in fighting forest fires.

Helicopter and fixed-wing water bombers save millions of acres of woodlands each year, protecting homes, national parks and the nation's precious forests.

General Aviation Makes Your Driving Safer, Smoother

Airborne traffic reporters broadcasting on radio and television help millions of Americans in their daily commute, reporting accidents and other tie-ups to drivers and to the police.

On a trip, you'll use maps drawn and updated from aerial photo data. That basic information is also used by urban planners, engineers



and government agencies to plan street and highway construction and improvements in the infrastructure.



General Aviation Works While You Sleep

All night long, general aviation expedites finan-

cial transactions by transporting canceled checks and other documents throughout the Federal Reserve System.

By cutting down the cost of “float” until checks clear, general aviation plays a vital role in banking and commerce.

General aviation also flies important documents and overnight packages on their way to offices, factories and individuals under next-day time pressures. Express freight like vital machine parts and mail to small towns also go by fast and flexible general aviation to thousands of locations where the major air carriers don't fly.

General Aviation Aids Agriculture

“Ag pilots” treat more than 300 million acres of cropland each year, boosting production of the nation's agricultural bounty. Sixty-five percent of all commercially employed crop protection is applied by air.

Planting, too, can often be done more efficiently by air. Ninety-five percent of the U.S. rice crop is planted by aircraft. Ranchers use general aviation aircraft to manage herds and grazing land.

Agriculture and general aviation are longtime partners in progress.



General Aviation Facilitates Law Enforcement

General aviation aircraft have revolutionized law enforcement in federal, state and local jurisdictions. Police use light airplanes and helicopters to patrol highways, apprehend suspects, back up ground units, monitor national borders and locate lost children.



In a single year, for example, airborne Los Angeles law enforcement officers responded to more than 32,995 incidents, an average of 3.8 per hour. The result: 3,500 arrests, 1,354 suspects spotted,

747 stolen cars recovered and 205 residential and other urban fires discovered. Government productivity, made possible by general aviation.

General Aviation: The People's Air Carrier

If scheduled airlines are the nation's air transport arteries, general aviation is its equally important capillary system.



Charter and air taxi flights carry passengers to and from smaller cities, tens of thousands of which have no airline service. Business, cargo and personal flights reach anywhere, any time – on the traveler's or shipper's schedule, not the airline's.

About 75% of major airline flights operate out of just 46 big city airports. Seventy percent of all airline passengers are merely shuttled among 30 hub airports. In all, only about 650 U.S. airports are certified for scheduled airline service with aircraft seating more than 30 passengers. But general aviation serves all 19,200 landing facilities in the United States. That figure includes some 13,600 airports, plus heliports, STOLports for Short TakeOff and Landing airplanes, and seaplane bases.

General aviation has a long and flexible reach. Use it.

General Aviation

Serving the People
All the People



The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association has represented general aviation and its pilots since 1939.

For more information about general aviation, visit www.GAservingAmerica.org



To join AOPA, call
1-800-USA-AOPA or visit www.aopa.org



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