

With AWOS, Florida airport's traffic blossoms

A new AWOS allowed Okeechobee Airport to attract corporate and charter aircraft, stimulating the local economy.

AWOS needed to increase business

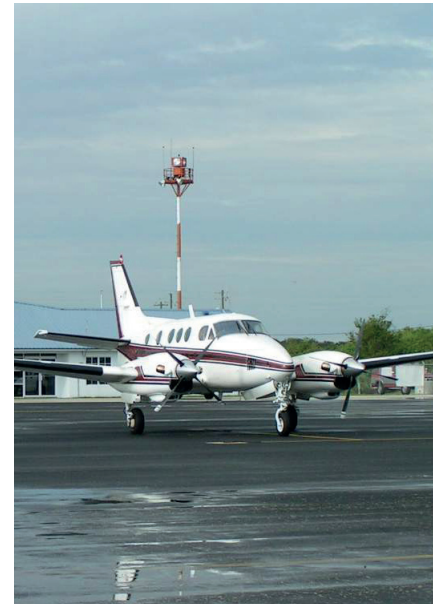
The Okeechobee Airport administration knew that it needed onsite weather measurement in order to gain more business. Automated weather observation systems (AWOS) the world over increase aviation safety by providing pilots with accurate and reliable weather information and readings: current altimeter setting, temperature/dew point, wind speed and direction, visibility, plus cloud height and sky condition.

Great potential for more business

The Okeechobee County Airport is located a few miles north of Lake Okeechobee, the largest lake in Florida. The airport's proximity to the lake and the Everglades region makes it an ideal landing spot for the thousands of visitors who come to the Everglades each year. The airport also handles traffic from three flight schools as well as occasional flyers landing to take advantage of the airport's low-priced fuel, two paint shops, mechanic services and restaurant.

Vaisala service makes sense

In 2004, Okeechobee County Airport received a Vaisala AWOS III, funded by the Florida Department of Transportation. In addition to vital weather information



Challenge

- Okeechobee Airport administration sees a clear need for an AWOS to increase safety and traffic

Solution

- A Vaisala AWOS IIIPT with lightning detection is installed
- Full Vaisala maintenance services, reliable operation and link to NADIN enable commercial and charter aircraft to use the airport

Benefits

- Reliable, accurate performance and nation-wide weather information to attract more flyers and to generate more business
- Enhanced aviation safety at an uncontrolled/non-towered airport
- Increase in air traffic

“There are certain activities that cannot take place at an airport unless you have weather reporting. An AWOS is a requisite for commercial activities.”

Vernon Gray,
Airport Manager,
Okeechobee Airport,
Okeechobee, Florida

readings, the Okeechobee AWOS includes a lightning detection sensor – an important system component in this lightning-sensitive part of the world. Airport Manager Vernon Gray chose Vaisala to provide full maintenance services for the AWOS, after using a different maintenance vendor for the first year. “It’s been better and less expensive to deal directly with the manufacturer for maintenance,” Gray said. “We don’t have to pay a markup on parts or wait around for another vendor to order the right Vaisala part if we ever need one.”

On the weather map

Along with the AWOS, Vaisala connects Okeechobee with the National Airspace Data Interchange Network (NADIN) through its AviMet® Datalink service. This makes the airport’s AWOS observations available for preflight briefing

from anywhere in the nation, and puts the community on the official “weather map.” For Okeechobee County Airport, having the NADIN linkage has meant the increase in traffic that the airport requires for its operations, as more pilots can access the airfield’s weather data.

Ready for growth

Air traffic at Okeechobee, of which 90 percent is transient, now averages in excess of 140 airplanes per day, including commercial and charter aircraft. The increase in air traffic not only directly benefits the surrounding community by stimulating and growing the local economy, it also brings more visitors to the Everglades region who might otherwise go elsewhere. Thanks to the Vaisala AWOS installation, Okeechobee has the capacity to ensure continued growth in revenues and air traffic.



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