



Durango-La Plata County Airport Newsletter – Winter 2017

Larger Aircraft at DRO

The commercial airline fleet mix continues to evolve at the Durango-La Plata County Airport. Long gone are the days of 19 seat Beechcraft and 34 seat Saabs, and now the 50 seat regional jets that have been the primary aircraft serving DRO for multiple years are becoming few and far between.

In January of 2017, only 36 out of 277 commercial departures were operated with 50 seat aircraft. The other 87% were served by 70-79 seat regional jets.

Both American and United Airlines are now operating Bombardier CRJ-700 and CRJ-900 aircraft on the predominant number of their routes into and out of DRO.



Not only do the larger aircraft deliver additional capacity into our market, they also provide an enhanced flying

experience by offering customers the option of premium cabin seating.

As the aircraft fleet mix serving DRO continues to grow in physical size and passenger numbers also increase, the airport must plan for more substantial peaks in traffic. This means that many components of our facility such as the aircraft parking apron, TSA screening, baggage claim, and the departure gate area will need to be able to accommodate a larger number of passengers in the same period of time.

Seasonal Los Angeles Service Returning

The Durango-La Plata County Airport (DRO) would like to remind its passengers that American Airlines will offer a second consecutive year of summer seasonal nonstop service to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in 2017.

Flights will run every Saturday beginning June 3rd through August 19th, providing passengers with direct access to Southern California, as well as improved connections up and down the west coast and to Hawaii, Asia, and Australia.

Fares on the nonstop route (Saturday to Saturday) are currently being advertised as low as \$329 by American Airlines.



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Connections through LAX as well as mid-week flights back to DRO through Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) are also competitively priced.



With increased awareness of the route in both SW Colorado and Southern California, utilization is anticipated to be strong. The success of key performance measures during year number two of the route will help to determine if a west coast hub fits into American Airlines' long-term route network plans for DRO.

In addition to seasonal nonstop Los Angeles service, American Airlines continues to operate daily departures to both Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) on a year-round basis. Each of these destinations offer hundreds of connections both domestically and internationally.

Snow Removal Update

A significant portion of the 2016-2017 snow removal season at DRO has passed, and yet airport staff remain prepared for the spring snowstorms that commonly impact SW Colorado.

The airport is responsible for issuing Notice to Airmen (NOTAM's) reporting the surface conditions of the airport to both arriving and departing pilots, as well as airline dispatch offices. This information is used to determine if and when an aircraft can safely transit the pavement surfaces of the airport.

Through the end of February, a total of 306 NOTAM's have been issued by airport staff specific to snow and ice conditions.



Airport snow removal is a nuanced process due to the limited margin for error with aircraft taking off and landing



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at high speeds. Airport staff take this responsibility very seriously and they approach winter operations with a sense of pride knowing that they enable thousands of passengers to fly through DRO safely during the winter.

Terminal Improvements

In a continued effort to improve the look, feel, and functionality of the airport's terminal facilities, several improvement projects have been completed in the last several months.

In the baggage claim area, additional lighting has been installed to brighten the space and improve the overall atmosphere. Tired and dirty plastic curtains used to separate the bag belt from the outside elements have been replaced with new materials.



New carpeting has been installed in the non-secure portions of the terminal and

replacement seating has been installed in these same areas. Potholes located in the airport's main parking lot exit and entry lanes have been repaired and additional overhead lighting has been installed at the entry and exit stations of the credit card lot to improve visibility for users.

Passengers seeking to charge their cell phones, tablets, or laptops now have additional options. Three mobile device charging stations have been placed in the terminal, with two located post-screening and one located pre-screening.



The staff at DRO strive to make the terminal facilities as comfortable and user-friendly as possible, and we are always searching for ways to further improve our facilities to meet the needs of the traveling public.



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Employee Spotlight

James Ludwig, STSO (Supervisor), TSA

By Barb Powers



For the past six years, James Ludwig has been part of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) team here at the Durango-La Plata County Airport.

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, James grew up in a very athletic household. He and his brothers played hockey and baseball starting at very early ages. Later, James was a pitcher for several different teams in the Independent Baseball League, in Texas, Kentucky and New York. He continues to work out regularly, as fitness is a very important part of his disciplined view of health and well-being.

At Mercyhurst College, when he wasn't playing baseball, James was studying for his B.A. in Criminal justice, with a concentration in law enforcement. Then he became interested in a career with the TSA, so he applied at over 40 different airports. Faced with choosing between offers from Hawaii, Mammoth Lakes (CA), Las Vegas, and Durango, his research showed Colorado could accommodate a lot of his interests. He took a chance, packed up his belongings, crossed his fingers, and made his way out here. Luckily, he found it a great fit, both on a personal level and at his job at the airport. Six months after arriving, he brought his girlfriend, Molly, out for a visit. After proposing to her while exploring Ouray, she accepted, and moved out a few months later. She now works for Axis Health, and they enjoy an active life together in our community.

When asked whether there have been any major incidents at the airport, James said it has been fairly uneventful. Occasionally, people will attempt to travel with items not allowed through the TSA, but they generally are cooperative, and sometimes even apologetic. He explained that if the items are as serious as handguns or the like, the passenger may face fines by the County, the TSA, or both.

James was involved in a recent job fair at Fort Lewis College, representing the TSA to help educate students about their duties and responsibilities, and talk about employment with this agency. His experience with the students was very positive. Many of them are not aware of what is involved in this particular job, so it was a good opportunity for them to make a personal connection with the agents, to better understand this process which, for some, can be stressful or confusing.

When James is not manning one of the many machines in the TSA area, he enjoys hiking with Molly and their dog, cooking healthy meals, and watching baseball and football on TV.