

CAA in the News:

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Airport Boosts Efforts To Halt Planes Flying Over Old Wethersfield

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The Connecticut Airport Authority, which operates Brainard Airport, has erected new signs at Brainard directing pilots to avoid take offs and landings over residential areas due to noise concerns. They are instructed to fly over the river to avoid the homes affected by the flights. (Cloe Poisson / Hartford Courant)

Brainard Airport is reminding private aviators not to fly over Old Wethersfield

WETHERSFIELD — For decades, low-flying aircraft from nearby Hartford-Brainard Airport have disturbed the otherwise peaceful ambience of Old Wethersfield, home of the state's largest historic district.

In response to complaints from residents and the town, the airport has long urged pilots to avoid taking off and landing over Old Wethersfield. The results have been mixed, officials say.

The state is taking a new step to discourage the over-flights. The Connecticut Airport Authority, which operates Brainard, is putting up signs by runways and in other locations asking pilots not to fly over Old Wethersfield.

"We're trying to encourage the pilot community to be as good a neighbor as it can be," said Kevin Dillon, executive director of the Connecticut Airport Authority. "We know the over-flights can be an annoyance, and we are trying to minimize them as much as possible."

The airport has already put up two signs on the airfield and one at the airplane parking area requesting aviators to ascend and descend over the Connecticut River instead of Old Wethersfield, Dillon said. A fourth sign will go up in the airport's car parking lot by week's end, he said.

In addition, the airport is handing out fliers with the same message, Dillon said.

Town Manager Jeff Bridges, chairman of the Brainard Airport Noise Abatement Committee, welcomed the measures. The airport, which serves only private planes, decided to put up the signs as part of its new master plan, Bridges said.

"You're never going to eliminate all of [the flights over town], but the more you eliminate, the less you have," he said. "It's an enhanced way to educate pilots."

Part of the challenge of educating pilots flying into and out of Brainard is that about 60 percent are not local, just passing through, Bridges said.

In addition, flying over Old Wethersfield for a landing is enticing because the steeple of First Church in the community's center lines up perfectly with the airport's main runway, Bridges said.

The state has no authority to ban approaches and takeoffs over Old Wethersfield, Dillon said. Only the federal government could do that, he said, adding that he didn't believe the volume of air traffic would justify it.

Dillon also noted that pilots need flexibility to react to changing conditions, such as reduced visibility and wildlife.

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