

# The Soaring Society of America, Inc.

PO Box 2100

Hobbs, NM 88241

505-392-1177 phone

505-392-8154 fax

## The “Secure Our Aviation Resources” Program

The “Secure Our Aviation Resources” (SOAR) program addresses misplaced perceptions that the sport of soaring poses adverse security risks to the general public.

The program provides advice for the soaring community in the airspace environment which has changed since 9/11/2001 and promotes the need for continuous thought and discussion throughout the general aviation community regarding safety and security related matters. It provides a protocol for soaring sites in order to increase the security of their operations.

The timing and methods of future terrorist attacks are uncertain; however, terrorists struck the United States utilizing civil air carriers as a weapon. Although there has been an existing threat of standard criminal exploitation of aviation (such as hijackings, smuggling activities, vandalism, and theft), in this post-9/11 world, pilots should display an increased sensitivity to security related matters. We should all make conscious efforts to take security precautions when appropriate, and we should encourage others to do the same.

The events of 9/11 have forever changed the way Americans look up at the sky. People are scared. There exists the potential for seemingly innocuous aviation activity to be reported to law enforcement authorities as “suspicious.” The same activity would have gone unreported prior to 9/11. Although this may be an unavoidable byproduct of a frightened citizenry, the promotion of responsible flying and enlightened security conscientiousness will help in assuaging public fears of general aviation.

### Section 1. Responsible Activity to be Undertaken by the Soaring Community.

*Things that we can do to secure our own aviation community - similar to a “neighborhood watch” program.*

#### A. Responsible actions we can take to secure ourselves on the **ground**.

- Restrict access to the flight line at our clubs and commercial operations to only those personnel who need to be there. Consider the appointment of individuals at the operation who will assume this responsibility. We don’t want to discourage the kid from hanging out at the airport fence – we just don’t

want an unrecognized individual to have easy access to an aircraft.

- Establish the plausibility of new customers at commercial operations, new members at club operations, and new partners in limited aircraft partnerships. By all means do not discriminate, but ensure these individuals are properly credentialed and that their intentions are genuine. Do not simply accept their intent at face value. Ask for identification and consider obviously altered identification as suspicious. Some recently issued identification might also be considered suspicious.
  - “Profiling” suspicious individuals based only on race or national origin would be unfair and inappropriate. Just because Middle Eastern terrorists were involved in the 9/11 attack does not mean their involvement will be apparent in the next attack.
- Ensure any keys to tow planes, training aircraft, and rental aircraft are maintained by appropriate personnel during the business day, and that the equipment is appropriately secured after hours. Restrict access to the tow planes and do not leave them unattended on the field for extended periods of time. Consider the installation of throttle or propeller locks. Do not make it easy for potential thieves.
- Install security systems whenever possible in building and hangars. Ensure that local law enforcement authorities are aware of the equipment at the operation, and request patrols of the facilities during normal business hours as well as after hours. In order to be secure in some instances, it may be sufficient to simply ensure that office and hangar doors are properly locked.
- Be alert to local aircraft which may have undergone abnormal modifications, or transient aircraft which may have unusual characteristics.
- The Soaring Safety Foundation (SSF) is a valuable resource that all clubs and commercial operations may take advantage of. The SSF conducts Site Safety Surveys which can improve the safety and security of your operation.

B. Responsible ways to conduct ourselves regarding **flight operations**.

- Check all available Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) and Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) before departing on a flight, especially a cross-country flight. Adhere to them stringently during the flight, erring on the side of caution if some aspect of the TFR or NOTAM is confusing. Stay well clear of any airspace restrictions.
- Observe all Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) meticulously while operating your aircraft. Use a generous interpretation of pertinent regulations. Err on the side of caution. Take responsible measures while flying which go over and above what is required by the regulations. Encourage other pilots to do the same.
- Personnel and physical security - Be familiar with any passenger in your glider and be comfortable with their carry-on articles. Do not feel embarrassed to inquire into the background of the passenger, to ask for identification, or to search a suspicious item or package. Being pilot in command, you are ultimately responsible. If you are not comfortable proceeding, consider this a suspicious event.
- Promote and attend general aviation safety seminars.
  - Clubs and commercial operations should consider hosting annual dedicated safety seminars – even more frequently if possible. Encourage clubs and commercial operations to host picnics and set aside some time to talk about the SOAR program on these occasions.
- Club officers and instructors, and commercial operation owners and staff, should actively coach soaring pilots to encourage compliance with SOAR program principles. Constructive criticism should also be presented, if appropriate.
- Be extremely cognizant of the dangers involved with **runway incursions** and **midairs** in the vicinity of airports. Although not necessarily security-related matters, the fewer incidents we have of this nature not only enhance our own safety, they keep our sport out of the newspapers and television news, and off the minds of legislators and regulators.
- **Network** within your soaring group. **Communicate** via email, newsletters, and hangar-flying sessions; and encourage

discussion of security-related issues among pilots. **Promote safe and responsible flying within general aviation.**

C. Suspicious activity to be aware of and to be on the lookout for.

- Individuals seeking flight instruction which does not correspond to their exhibited experience level.
  - Student pilots seeming too eager to get advanced training.
  - Pilots demanding flight instruction without having adequately prepared by investing time in ground instruction.
- Individuals attempting to rent or lease aircraft under suspicious circumstances.
  - Non-local pilots displaying behavior inconsistent with the purported use of the aircraft being rented.
- Individuals loitering near flight lines or aircraft operations after having been specifically requested not to do so.
- Aircraft believed to be involved in reconnaissance of the country's utility infrastructure.
  - Aircraft loitering near nuclear power plants, oil refineries, transformer facilities.
- Aircraft surveilling sensitive U.S. government installations at low altitudes or otherwise flying through restricted airspace.
  - National Laboratories
  - P-40 (Camp David), P-49 (Crawford, Texas)
  - TFRs set up near national or internationally recognized special events.
- The theft of items which may have appeared innocuous prior to 9/11 – pilots and mechanics uniforms, access badges, nametags, FBO shirts, keys.
- Any other activity which is truly out of the ordinary and is clearly suspicious.

- For use when your “sixth sense” tells you something is wrong.

D. Responsible ways to **report** suspicious activity.

- Without risking harm to anyone involved in the activity, including the individuals doing the reporting, collect as much specific information as possible. Attempt to collect names, dates, times, descriptive data, registration numbers, locations.
- A good way to report suspicious activity at your airport is to use the 1-866-GA-SECURE (866-427-2873) line. This is a direct line to the National Response Center.
- Call local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (the phone numbers are listed in the front of most telephone directories). Be prepared to fully identify yourself and the activity which you have observed. Post these numbers prominently in your clubhouse or office to ensure they are available to all pilots.
- Threats of an immediate life-threatening nature should be reported to local law enforcement authorities as soon as possible. These individuals are likely to be the first responders to any perceived threat.
- Realize there may be a plausible explanation for the activity you have deemed suspicious, and don't feel too bad if you later suspect nothing ever came of your information. It may end up being extremely useful to the authorities.
- Don't feel embarrassed to call the authorities to report something which might not have seemed suspicious prior to 9/11. Evaluating, analyzing, and responding to suspicious activity is an important function of these agencies.

Section 2. Actions Which Can be Undertaken to Raise Public Awareness of the Responsible Conduct of Soaring Pilots.

*Things that we can do to further an understanding and appreciation of the sport of soaring.*

- Clubs and FBOs should consider “**Community Outreach**” efforts.

- Have knowledgeable, experienced, and personable representatives of clubs and commercial operations visit the security staff of local power plants and other industries which may benefit from the outreach efforts. These individuals can provide trustworthy insight into the sport. Explain the concepts of towing as well as silent soaring flight, and describe the meteorological “needs” of the glider pilot. The goal here is to allay concerns that the local soaring community may pose a threat to the community. Consider offering rides or tours of your facilities.
- County Boards, Village Councils, even some Airport Commissions would benefit from similar outreach visits.
- During the off-season, clubs and commercial operations should consider arranging to set up soaring displays in shopping malls. Assemble a high-performance glider in the common area and rope off the perimeter. Broadcast a quality videotape on the sport of soaring on an accompanying TV/VCR, and hand out Soaring Society of America brochures and advertising information for local clubs and commercial operations. Have knowledgeable individuals on hand to answer questions, explain the SOAR program, and advertise our sport. Ask for discounted display rates from the mall operators to illustrate the primary goal of increasing community awareness of the general aviation community. Private owners could benefit from having annual inspections conducted on their assembled gliders at this time.
- Clubs and Commercial Operations should consider **“Advertising”** efforts.
  - Invite local newspaper and television stations to visit clubs or commercial operations. Offer rides to not only advertise the interesting aspects of the sport, but to underscore the non-strategic threat posed by soaring. Arrange for interviews with knowledgeable, experienced, and personable individuals who can do an effective job as spokespersons - selling our sport to the public.

- Invest the time and effort in an interesting and insightful web site for your club or commercial operation which could be used to disseminate information about soaring. Broaden access to the site by asking other aviation and non-aviation sites (such as community web sites) to provide links to it.
- Consider the preparation and distribution of press releases from your club or commercial operation to highlight the interesting aspects of the sport and further assuage public concerns that soaring poses a strategic threat. They can be disseminated to general aviation related publications, as well as mainstream media. Include high quality color photographs.
- Clubs and commercial operations need to encourage effective and timely two-way channels of communication between the members/customers and the officers/owners.

### Section 3. Promoting the “Secure Our Aviation Resources” Program.

*Advancing the thoughts and theories of responsible security awareness.*

The SOAR program was initiated by the Soaring Society of America to ease any misplaced perceptions that the glider community could pose adverse security risks to the general public.

Officials of the SSA, realizing that soaring did not pose a strategic threat to the United States, developed the program to further this understanding within the sport of soaring and throughout the general aviation community. Another significant goal was to promote the need for continuous thought and discussion throughout the general aviation community regarding security related matters. **The society realized there were safety benefits to be gleaned from the SOAR program which stemmed from the increased conscientiousness devoted to security related matters.**

Incumbent in the success of this program will be the mandate on the directors of the SSA, and the leaders of other general aviation organizations, to continue efforts to communicate with legislators and regulators in Washington and within state government to underscore the fact that general aviation does not pose a strategic threat to society. We can make it easier for these individuals to sell the program to these leaders by promoting the program ourselves at the grass roots level, as well as by acting responsibly and safely as pilots.

The SSA and other general aviation organizations will continue to liaise on a national level with commercial aviation organizations to increase safety and lessen security related misunderstandings between these two large aviation industries.

Volunteers from the SSA will conduct security presentations at safety seminars, SSA Town Meetings, and at Instructor Revalidation Clinics throughout the country. Local clubs and commercial operations are encouraged to host these events, or to organize their own local discussions.

Although terrorists have not exploited general aviation, the SSA realized our country possessed a valuable tool in the struggle against terrorism. This tool was, and continues to be, the increased safety and security conscientiousness among our membership. The SOAR program recognizes this fact, and serves as the catalyst for extending these efforts throughout the general aviation community.