

W48 Safety and Security Plan

Recent vandalism has highlighted safety and security issues at Essex Skypark.

In the last 5 years or so we have seen:

- ATVs and Motorcycles tearing up the turf runway, seaplane ramp, the trees planted for mitigation and some forays onto the taxiways and near hangars. They have also been seen drag racing and riding wheelies down the paved runway.
- Windows smashed out of a pilot's car parked next to a hangar over a weekend.
- On-field FBI/DEA presence for a drug bust
- Illegal Dumping
- Cables cut at access points
- Barriers moved at access points
- Locks cut at access points
- Hinge bolts removed at the RC field gate.

Discussions with local police, the MAA and the airport managers at Fallston Airport and Hagerstown Airport have prompted our response and helped us to draft this solution. The Essex police precinct has recently had internal discussions about protecting our peninsula. They do not want unchecked petty vandalism to embolden the perpetrators, eventually leading to breaking-and-entering, arson and worse. They will respond to vandalism calls. This is a different police approach than in years past.

Recognizing that fortifying the airfield in order to stop 100% of crime and vandalism is obviously an impractical and undesirable solution, this plan is directed toward mitigation. The goal is to prevent what we can today and actively work this plan year-to-year to make it difficult for perpetrators to act here.

The W48 Safety and Security plan has five overlapping components:

1. **Vigilance and responsiveness from on-field personal.** We've all heard it before: If you see something, say something. Many of the hangar owners have security cameras set up and more are considering the purchase.
2. **Defined fencing, gates and borders including signage.** We cannot enforce trespassing laws, and police cannot threaten first offenders unless we have a defined "no-trespassing" area. We have received 15 signs from the MAA at no cost to the ESA. In the short term, volunteers will repair and replace damaged barriers, cables and signs. Longer term, we can apply for an MAA 90% grant for proper fencing and automatic gate(s). Information gathering for this type of project is already underway. It could happen as soon as August.
3. **Security cameras.** Now that we have WIFI, high quality, motion-sensing cameras are much less expensive than the previous cell-based or stand-alone camera systems (as an example: four Ring dual spotlight motion cameras cost \$890). Police have told us that, for large outdoor areas like parks, the local landfill and the airport, the cameras can be used for vehicle and personnel ID at gates but they are also valuable when pointed out at the field. Airport personnel can monitor the cameras remotely and phone 911 as necessary.

4. **Leasing the FBO offices** means a regular on-airport presence, deterring opportunistic vandalism and adding another set of eyes. Sometimes a vehicle in the parking lot is all that is needed!
5. **Ongoing open communication with our neighbors** and neighborhood associations. Dean and Jeff met with some of our ATV-riding neighbors just this week. Mike has met with the owner of the property SE of the airport and with those trying to keep ATVs and motorcycles off the property behind the old machine shop on Back River Neck Rd. All are feeling threatened and want to act to stop it. Communication with neighbors also includes online social media posts explaining the issues and asking for help.

We are always open to any ideas you may have. Much more information is forthcoming. We will need volunteers to help erect barriers and signage.