

ISSUES RELATED TO THE SACRAMENTO EXECUTIVE AIRPORT NOISE ORDINANCE AND SINGLE-EVENT NOISE LIMIT

Introduction

Sacramento Executive Airport (SAC) has had a single-event noise limit for twenty seven years. The original limit was increased by four decibels 13 years ago in 1994, to accommodate some of the larger, more technologically advanced aircraft that were capable of serving SAC, but could not due to the single-event limit. An analysis of the increase in the single-event limit indicated that the increase in the single event limit would have a negligible effect on the aircraft noise environment in the neighborhoods around SAC.

Noise Contours on Airport Property

The SAC single-event noise limit was originally one of the eight voluntary noise abatement procedures recommended in the 1979 Executive Airport Master Plan. In September 1980, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted to create a formal noise ordinance that would limit the use of the airport to aircraft with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certificated takeoff noise levels of 80 EPNdB or less. The purpose of the ordinance was to keep the 65 community noise equivalent level (CNEL) contour within the airport boundary or on the adjacent public property (i.e., the Bing Maloney Golf Course). In October 1980, the City of Sacramento, which owns SAC, adopted a similar noise ordinance. In 1994 as noted above, the limit was increased to 84 EPNdB.

A Change is Required

Recently, the FAA has expressed concern to the Sacramento County Airport System that the single event limit, which applies to turbojet aircraft only, may be discriminatory. Based on this opinion, the restriction established by the ordinance must at least be revised to use a non-discriminatory metric without being more restrictive. In addition, there are many aircraft types for which there is no EPNdB data - making the ordinance difficult to enforce. Finally, when the original noise ordinance was enacted, the General Aviation aircraft fleet was substantially noisier (business jets in particular) than it is today. Aircraft being manufactured today are substantially quieter than aircraft operating twenty seven years ago.

An Opportunity to Provide Input

The SAC Master Plan update provides an appropriate opportunity to reevaluate the single event noise limit. The Master Plan update has produced forecasts of future aircraft operations and fleet mix from which future aircraft noise exposure can be developed. The affect of changing the single event limit can be compared to the expected aircraft noise level contours. Finally, the Master Plan provides public forums in which possible options for revising the ordinance may be considered and openly discussed.