



MERRILL FIELD BULLETIN

Fly MRI – Alaska's First and Friendliest Airport

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

WELCOME TO 2026! I HOPE YOUR HOLIDAYS WERE EVERYTHING YOU WISHED FOR, AND THAT THE YEAR AHEAD BRINGS GREAT THINGS YOUR WAY.

MASTER PLAN: Our major project for 2026 won't be as disruptive as last year's runway rehabilitation, but it will be just as important for MRI's future. The Airport Master Plan will guide us in shaping a strong, forward looking strategy to ensure MRI continues to meet the needs of our aviation community—both here at home and across the state. I've listened closely to your feedback since arriving, and I'm committed to building on our "legacy of flight and a future without limits."

STORM WATER POLLUTION PREVENTION PLAN (SWPPP): It's time once again to revisit our SWPPP. Many tenants are already familiar with this process, and we've partnered with HDL to help educate, update, and implement the program over the next five years. We've also received several questions about fuel tanks on the airfield, and this review period will allow us to address inconsistencies in policies that developed over different eras. More information will be coming soon.

AIRSPACE CHANGES: The military has opened public comment on significant proposed airspace changes, including areas over the Anchorage Bowl. The comment window is unusually short, so pilots are strongly encouraged to review the proposal and submit feedback promptly. Pay close attention to the floor of each airspace sector. The deadline for public comment is February 9th. Website: <https://www.jparcairspaceeis.com/>

STATS: If you've wondered whether last summer's runway construction affected MRI's operations, the answer is yes—slightly. Total annual operations decreased to **145,576**, down from roughly **160,000** in 2024. Based aircraft remain steady at **850**, which puts MRI 4th in the nation for based aircraft. Although it looks like there are several open spaces on the ramps, we are at about 90% capacity. Fuel sales increased over 168,000 gallons over 2024. MRI's Part 135 Operators will be sending in their emplanements to the FAA this month, and a NEW measurement we will be requesting from operators for 2026 is tons of cargo shipped. Oh, and only one aircraft escaped the airport last year! 🙄

MAINTENANCE MATTERS CONTINUED ON PAGE 2...

Since January 5, Merrill Field has experienced an almost nonstop series of snow events, creating challenging maintenance conditions. During this record-breaking period, the Merrill Field Maintenance team would like to sincerely thank all field users for their patience and cooperation as we continue to train and integrate our new crew members.

Winter operations require precision, coordination, and safety-focused decision-making, and training new personnel during snow season adds an extra layer of complexity. Despite these challenges, our team has been working diligently to keep runways, taxiways, roads, and movement areas as safe and accessible as possible.

TOWER TRANSMISSIONS



All pilots are reminded of the critical importance of actively listening to ATC instructions and providing complete, accurate readbacks. Clearances, taxi instructions, runway assignments, altitudes, and hold-short instructions must be fully heard, correctly understood, and read back verbatim as required. Assumptions, partial readbacks, or distracted listening increase the risk of runway incursions, altitude deviations, and loss of separation. If any portion of an ATC instruction is unclear, pilots are expected to request clarification immediately before proceeding. Here are a couple of examples of common readback/hearback errors at Merrill:

Example 1:

Ground Control issues: “N12345, runway 26, taxi via November, Kilo.”

The pilot reads back: “N12345 via November, Kilo.”

The controller will ask you to read back the runway assignment—the air traffic control manual (FAAO 7110.65, 3-7-2) requires confirmation of the correct runway assignment. While pilots aren’t expected to read our manual, this requirement is also reflected in the AIM. Section 4-3-18 (Taxiing) states:

“9. When taxi instructions are received from the controller, pilots should always read back: (a) The runway assignment. (b) Any clearance to enter a specific runway. (c) Any instruction to hold short of a specific runway or line up and wait. 10. Controllers are required to request a readback of runway hold-short assignment when it is not received from the pilot/vehicle.”

Example 2:

Tower says: “N789, number two, follow Cessna on one-mile final, runway 26, cleared to land.”

The pilot reads back: “N789, cleared to land 26.”

The controller is going to wonder if you heard the instruction to follow the other aircraft. The danger is that you might miss that part, turn base, and conflict with the aircraft on final.

You will rarely be wrong reading back the controller’s clearance verbatim—as long as you fully understand it.

Additionally, pilots should guard against expectation bias and complacency, particularly in high-workload or familiar environments. Hearing what is expected rather than what is actually said is a known contributor to incidents and errors. Taking the extra moment to confirm instructions with ATC is always preferable to correcting a mistake after the fact, and conservative communication practices are fully supported in the interest of safety. ■

MAINTENANCE MATTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

We would like to remind users of the Golf and Quebec aprons that driving on the taxiways is neither acceptable nor safe. Golf apron users should use the entrance and exit across from Aircraft Engines. Quebec apron users and Flare Station parking customers should only use the access across from Dena’ina Air Taxi and exercise extreme caution in front of the Golf South aircraft gate. Although these taxiways are uncontrolled, they are heavily used by departing and arriving helicopters and various other users, including critical medivac flights.

Additionally, we have seen an increase in vehicles exiting the taxiways at aircraft gates, causing nuisance gate activations and trips. This takes valuable time away from maintenance crews performing essential tasks.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Merrill will be working with the Streets Department to stage snow berms in the Quebec apron for Fur Rondy starting in the coming weeks. We’ve been told Merrill has some of the best and cleanest snow in Anchorage!

ADMIN MATTERS

THE ADMIN TEAM WELCOMES YOU TO 2026!

The new year rung in new branding for the Airport Managers Office. Check out our new logo. The airport was able to partner with a local designer to create the graphic. We are excited for the change and continued charge forward to Merrill Field's 100-year anniversary coming up in 2030. Be on the lookout for future communications regarding the biggest birthday bash you have ever been invited to...in 2030.

You will soon notice new hanging banners along Merrill Field Drive as you navigate through the airport's main road. They will surely spruce up the driving road and show our commitment to the beautification of the airport. Earl, Airport Manager, has logged countless hours of thought and brainstorm sessions to determine how we can

continuously improve the airport. The new logo, branding and hanging banners are just the start. The Manager's office always appreciates feedback and ideas to keep this airport family on track and stronger than ever.

Please be on the lookout for communications and **SAVE THE DATE** for the **2026 Annual Aviation Celebration** coming up on **Saturday May 30th**. We will need awesome aircraft to display at the event, local groups that want to show off (aero clubs, car clubs, motorcycle clubs, food trucks, non-profits, aviation businesses, etc.). We almost have a 501c3 tax receipt plan set up and will be looking for donations to help pay for the event. Please contact the Managers office if you have ideas or would like to volunteer to help with this awesome annual event.

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT **SPERNAK AIRWAYS**



SPERNAK AIRWAYS **A MERRILL FIELD LEGACY** **SINCE 1955**

If you've spent any time around Merrill Field, you already know the name: Spernak Airways, a true Anchorage original that has been operating from the very same spot since 1955. What began with founder George Spernak flying across Cook Inlet to support the village of Tyonek has grown into a proud three generation family operation—now led by Mike Spernak, with the next generation already on deck through Katrina Spernak.

Today, Spernak Airways continues its mission with the same spirit of service and adventure that shaped its early days. They provide scheduled and on demand air taxi service to the west side of Cook Inlet and the Mat Su Valley, and they work closely with other air taxi operators to help travelers reach remote villages, lodges, and destinations across Alaska.

As a full service FBO, Spernak offers 100LL fueling, Alaska charts and supplements, and a welcoming hub for pilots and passengers alike. Whether you're looking for a year round flightseeing tour or a custom air adventure tailored just for you, their team is ready to make it happen.

Behind the scenes, chief mechanic and business partner Ben Wilkinson keeps aircraft in top shape, offering maintenance services by appointment. And here's a fun piece of history: Spernak Airways has supported the Iditarod Air Force since its inception, a tradition they proudly continue today.

Walk into their office and you'll find what every pilot appreciates—hot coffee, a full candy dish, and plenty of hangar talk. With decades of experience and deep knowledge of Merrill Field and Alaska aviation, the Spernak team either has the answer or knows exactly who does.

As the oldest continuously operating air taxi service in Anchorage—and possibly one of the oldest in all of Alaska—Spernak Airways stands as a testament to reliability, community, and the enduring spirit of Alaska aviation. After 70 years, one thing is clear: they're doing something very, very right.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR UPCOMING EVENTS

Let us know of your aviation related event in time to list it here next quarter! Don't forget to give us the date, time, location, and contact info.

First come, first served.

Email us at: merrillinfo@ci.anchorage.ak.us

MAAAC Board Meetings:

Are held monthly on the first Thursday of each month, from 12:00 to 1:00 at the Anchorage Fire Department Training Center Building C room 9

(subject to change) and on TEAMS.

FEB 05	MAAAC Board Meeting
MAR 05	MAAAC Board Meeting
APR 02	MAAAC Board Meeting

Upcoming User Group Meetings for the year:

Held quarterly on the 1st Wednesday of the month at the Manager's Office conference room @ 12:00 noon.

FEB 04	User Group Meeting
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SECURE FLOAT STORAGE AT MRI

If you are interested in storing floats at MRI, please contact our Customer Service Specialist at: Merrillinfo@ci.anchorage.ak.us or come by the Manager's Office.

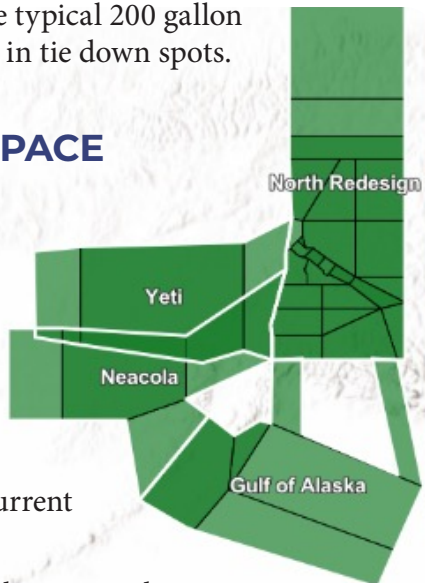
FUEL TANKS ON TIE DOWNS...

MRI has reviewed the policy for fuel tanks in a permitted tie down. In short, fuel tanks on trailers will be restricted to commercial grade tanks. The updated policy will be addressed in the next User Group meeting and be put in effect April 1st, 2026. Other restrictions will be discussed and published soon. The typical 200 gallon tanks are not permitted in tie down spots.

NEW MOA AIRSPACE REDESIGN

PARC Proposed MOA airspace redesign is to "optimize the regional training environment necessary for the 4th and 5th Generation aircraft to accomplish current and future training.

For more information, please go online at:
<https://jparcairspaceis.com/overview-of-proposed-action/>



Are you following MRI on social media?

Let's see how fast we can go
from 1000 to 2000 followers!

Be notified of the special events
and exciting news!



Airfield Housekeeping! Remember to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Cleanup and removal of trash and potential flying debris (FOD). ✦ Remove flammable materials from around fueling operations. ✦ Comply with Municipal Code requirements for storage, handling, and dispensing of fuel. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Remove all motorhomes, buses, boats, vehicles and/or trailers parked in aircraft aprons. ✦ Removal of vehicles from the airside of the airport. ✦ FAA mandated MRI to conduct a fire Marshall Inspection for any leasehold that does not comply. |
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Just a reminder that the 2nd quarter of 2026 begins on April 1st.

Automated payments will be processed at that time, so please ensure everything is set up accordingly. Keep the office apprised of any changes to your credit card, payment account, or billing info to ensure your payments are processed smoothly.

Merrill Field Airport is celebrating "Serving Alaska for 95 years!"