

Aviation Reports Now Available for Consumers

Unfortunately aviation, like all human endeavors, encompasses good people and the not so good. The dichotomy is particularly prevalent in the realm of experimental and ultralight aircraft. Because these aircraft are not susceptible to close FAA scrutiny, persons who specialize in their sale and marketing too often succumb to ethical temptations.

UltraFlight Magazine has received many requests for assistance from disgruntled buyers and customers. The great number of displeased patrons led to the previous articles in UltraFlight entitled *How to Find the Right Ultralight Instructor* (May 1999), *Finding a Good Ultralight Manufacturer* (August 1999,) and *Introducing the Light Aircraft Manufacturer's and Consumer's Data Network* (October 1999.) These articles are archived at the web site <http://www.cyberskies.com/ultralight>, or past issues may be obtained from UltraFlight.

The *Consumer's Data Network* article mentioned above was a proposal for someone to come forward to establish a means of receiving and compiling consumer complaints (and compliments.) The intent was for the Network to contact the manufacturer, dealer, mail-order company, instructor or entity who was the subject of the complaint and try to remedy or mediate the situation. A record would be kept of all the correspondence, and the record would be available to the public for a modest fee. The fee would cover the Network's expenses.

Many readers responded to the *Network* article, saying they would love to see such an organization in existence. Unfortunately, no one seemed to be interested in actually running the enterprise.

Still, consumer complaints have continued to arise.

Therefore, a modified form of the Network has been created, called **Aviation Reports**. This is a web site where a consumer may post a message reporting a problem with an aviation entity. Accolades may also be posted, but I'll refer to "complaints" in this article (since people are more likely to complain than to commend). Simply posting messages on the Aviation Reports web site is not as effective as the proposed Network would have been. But at least the Aviation Reports postings can serve a couple of functions.

It will give the complainant an opportunity to alert other consumers of a problem entity. It gives the complainant a chance to have his problem addressed by the offending party. Hopefully, the offending party might be more motivated to address the problem in order to avoid a negative post on the web site.

The web address is <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AviationReports>. The web site is not monitored, so no one will personally send you an answer to your message. There is no charge to be a member of the site or to post a message.

Before posting a message you should tell the offending party that you intend to post a complaint on the Aviation Reports web site. The warning may cause the party to address your problem. In fairness, it will also give the party a chance to post a response. The items listed below are the protocol rules for the site.

Aviation Reports Protocol

1. All messages should be signed (no anonymous messages.)
2. All messages should be factual, not just opinions and references to third person declarations and hearsay. "Factual" means that the sender should be personally involved in the situation. The message should contain explicit details about the problem. The details should include the dates that the complainant has contacted the offending party.
3. Before posting the message the sender should notify the offending party that he intends to post a complaint on Aviation Reports, and give the offending party a chance to respond on the web site. The sender posting the complaint should specifically state in his post that he has notified the offending party that a message will be posted.
4. The complainant should post a follow-up message if the dispute is resolved.
5. Persons who disagree should stick to the facts, and not attack each other as individuals. Flaming is not appropriate or beneficial. ("Flaming" is an Internet term for non-productive, personal attacks on a web site.)
6. Compliments and commendations should be posted about good experiences with honest and reputable entities. The site is not limited to complaints.
7. Even reputable people can make mistakes. The point is how the offending person resolves the dispute, and the effort that he puts into alleviating the problem, not the fact that there was an error in the first place.

The purpose of the Aviation Reports web site is to encourage and promote the good guys in aviation, and expose the bad ones. If used productively this site can hopefully make a difference.

The more people who know about the site and utilize it, the more effective it will be. Please encourage aviation enthusiasts to participate. A copy of this article is posted on the Aviation Reports web site, so that it can easily be e-mailed to interested persons.