



TORRANCE AIRPORT ASSOCIATION

Disaster Airlift Response Team
2785 Pacific Coast Highway #E164
Torrance, CA 90505

Dixie Fire Airlift Operation Recap

08/17/2021

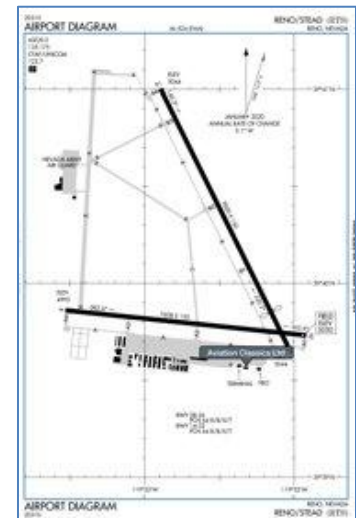
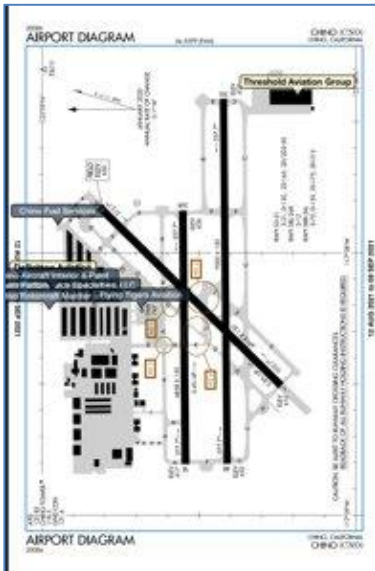
SERVICE REQUEST:

On the evening of August 9, a call for assistance came in on the CalDART Duty Line. UMCOR, the disaster response arm of the United Methodist Church was asking CalDART to transport 42 medium shipping boxes weighing 1,100 pounds from Southern California to the town of Quincy in the Northern Sierras to replace back-to-school supplies and other items needed by 200 kids whose homes in Greenville burned in the Dixie Fire. The request was circulated to the statewide DART Operator Leadership for support, and by the next morning T-DART agreed to respond. The T-DART Operation Lead sent out a request for instrument-rated pilots and aircraft to CalDART members and friends throughout the state.

PLANNING:

Because the donor of the supplies, UMCOR, was located in Ontario, CA, the Chino Airport was selected as the departure point for the airlift. Due to the proximity of the Quincy Airport to the fire's Temporary Flight Restrictions area, its extensive use by fire-fighting aircraft and uncertainty about its obscuration by smoke at arrival time, the Reno-Stead Airport was selected as the destination airport for the airlift. This required a 2-hour ground transport for the supplies to reach their final destination in Quincy and road closures due to the fire became a constraint in destination selection.

Based on aircraft/pilot availability, 17 August was selected as the mission date. Two mission aircraft, a Cessna 182 from Santa Rosa and a Cessna CJ3 from Torrance, were scheduled to depart Chino to arrive simultaneously at Stead about 15:00 for the transfer via truck to Quincy. FBOs at both airports were contacted and gave permission to operate through their facilities.



T-DART Operation Lead published a Mission Plan which summarized the mission, it's contacts, the mission schedule. This was updated as the planning progressed up to a final update the night before the mission.

EXECUTION:

On the morning of Mission Day, the weather reports for the Reno area, as expected, showed the effects of the Dixie fire--visibility at Stead was 2 1/2 miles and the ceiling was several thousand feet above ground level.



At 10:30, the first mission aircraft, the Cessna 182, arrived at the Threshold FBO at Chino airport and minutes later the donors arrived with the cargo and ten of their volunteers to help load the cargo. The team was able to fit 10 of the boxes--370 pounds--into the 182 cargo hold. The first mission aircraft departed on time at approximately 11:00 for its 2.6 hour flight to Stead. Since the second mission aircraft, a Cessna CJ3, was not due in until 13:00, the volunteers stacked the remaining cargo near the parking area the FBO had designated for our use.

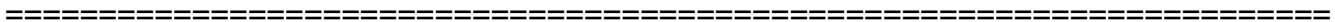
Right on time, the second mission aircraft, the CJ3, arrived and some of the donor volunteers returned to help load it with the remaining 32 boxes of cargo--a total of 776 pounds. Without the use of the CJ3, another 4 to 6 aircraft and pilots would have been needed to move the cargo.



The CJ3 departed Chino at about 14:00 for its 1.3 hour flight to Stead. The route from Chino to Stead required transit through the Dixie Fire smoke cloud which stretched for many hundreds of miles and rose to over 40,000 feet in places. Both mission aircraft encountered zero visibility and significant turbulence during the transit of the smoke plume.



Both mission aircraft arrived within a 30 minute period at Reno-Stead and proceeded to unload at the Classic Aviation FBO into a van arranged by the donors for the final leg to Quincy.



For more information, contact:
Jim Gates (Operation Lead)
424-634-2863



Inside the CJ3 cabin--the rest of the 32 boxes that wouldn't fit into the cargo holds



Approaching the smoke plume



Penetrating the smoke plume at 15,000 ft near Reno--zero visibility and significant turbulence