

AVFLASH NEWS

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FAA Suggests Markings For Met Towers

By *Mary Grady*, Contributing editor

A pilot in California was **killed** earlier this month when his airplane struck a 197-foot-tall tower during an agricultural flight, just a few days after the FAA published a **proposed policy** that would establish voluntary procedures for marking such towers. Meteorological, or met, towers gather data to determine if a site would be profitable to develop for wind power, and they have proliferated in rural areas in recent years. Many of the towers are built to heights just a few feet below the 200-foot level that would **require** FAA notification and markings. The towers are often "narrow, unmarked and grey in color ... nearly invisible under some atmospheric conditions," according to the National Agricultural Aviation Association. The FAA proposes that the towers should be painted in alternating orange and white stripes, but compliance would be voluntary. The FAA is accepting **comments** on its proposal until Feb. 4.



Several of the comments already in the docket suggest that the FAA's guidelines should be mandatory. Others suggest that lighting should also be required. Iowa's Department of Transportation wrote, "Voluntary compliance ... falls short of a comprehensive national solution that addresses MET tower hazards." The DOT also suggested that strobe lighting should be required to ensure nighttime visibility. Brian Fox, of the Idaho Army National Guard, also said compliance should not be voluntary, and added that the wavelength "needs to be compatible with night-vision goggles." AOPA wrote, "Because of the danger to aircraft that exists from unmarked and unlighted meteorological towers, it is essential that they be made as conspicuous as possible"; however, AOPA concurred with the voluntary nature of the FAA plan. This PowerPoint (**PDF**) by the National EMS Pilots Association shows how difficult it can be to spot one of these tall, skinny towers from the air.

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