



**PIPER MEMORIAL AIRPORT
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For Immediate Release:

Lock Haven Flight School Reluctantly Adds Fuel Surcharge

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Lock Haven, PA, 4 March 2011 – As every motorist knows, the only thing predictable about fuel costs is that they will fluctuate unpredictably. Recent sharp increases in energy prices have hit the aviation industry especially hard, causing airline fares to skyrocket. Now AvSport of Lock Haven, the sport aviation training center established last year at the Piper Memorial Airport, has been forced to add a fuel surcharge to its aircraft rental and training package costs.

“In just one year, our fuel costs have gone from below \$3 to roughly \$5 a gallon,” explains Prof. H. Paul Shuch, AvSport’s founder and chief flight instructor. “Rather than raise the price of our training programs themselves, it seems fairest to the local flying community for us to simply institute a variable fuel surcharge, which can hopefully decrease (or even disappear entirely) should energy prices ever normalize.”

AvSport’s fuel surcharge will add about \$200 to the cost of becoming a licensed pilot. It is being set initially at \$10 per flight hour and reevaluated monthly, effective on 1 April 2011. It will apply to newly contracted flight training programs and aircraft rentals only. For block instruction and lessons prepaid prior to that date, previous prices will still be honored. “I regret the additional cost burden this change will represent for our students,” says Shuch, “but sport flying nevertheless remains an exciting and affordable recreational activity.” In an effort to further stimulate public interest in general aviation, the cost of AvSport’s Discovery Flights (\$49) and Introductory Lessons (\$99) will remain unchanged.

One reason for the sharp rise in fuel costs for sport aircraft is the unintended consequence of a legislative mandate. Modern sport aircraft, as well as many classics (such as the legendary, locally produced Piper Cub) were designed to run on automotive fuel. AvSport’s primary trainer, for example, is compatible with 93 octane unleaded premium auto gas. However, current laws require all auto fuel sold in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to contain at least 10% ethanol. Unfortunately, for various technical reasons it is unsafe to use fuel containing ethanol in most aircraft. Thus, a policy intended to reduce our dependence on foreign oil has forced AvSport, and other aircraft operators, to convert to the considerably more costly 100 octane leaded AvGas (which itself has negative environmental implications).

The Sport Pilot license is the newest portal of entry into the world of aviation, allowing prospective pilots to become licensed in half the time, and at half the cost, of the traditional Private Pilot license. Sport pilots fly for fun, and are restricted to flying simple, safe, low performance aircraft that comply with the Light Sport rule. They are allowed to carry a single passenger, flying in uncongested airspace, during daylight hours, and only in good weather conditions.

Piper Memorial Airport is the ancestral home to the legendary Piper Cub, arguably the world’s first sport plane. Modern Light Sport aircraft allow pilots to recapture the bygone fly-for-fun Cub era, with increased reliability and improved safety.