

Celebrity Golf a massive money maker for LT Airport

By Kathryn Reed

One need never go to Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course to know the celebrity golf tournament is going on now. Just listen. Hear that plane traffic? It's the golfers in their expensive planes flying in and out of Lake Tahoe Airport.

"I can tell you they have a large impact on the airport," Sherry Miller, airport director, said of the celebrities who land in South Lake Tahoe.



A limo is set to transport the group that arrived via this XQJet on July 13 at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

They started arriving July 8. Some of the players who are here for the tournament that runs through Sunday come early to get acclimated to the higher elevation, and to walk a few rounds without the media and fans hounding them.

Some fly in on their own jet, which might sit on the ramp for several days. Others come in via charter service. No matter who owns the plane, it's a financial boon to the airport.

"It means a huge amount to the community," Miller said of the tournament. "I would venture to say this is our busiest time of year."

In July 2009, the city collected \$12,559 in landing fees, according to Miller. For the entire 2008-09 fiscal year the airport collected \$39,180.11 in landing fees.

Lake Tahoe Airport charges a landing fee for planes weighing more than 6,000 pounds. The cost is \$3.40 per 1,000 pounds. The average fee is \$45.

Falcons pay \$60, Gulf Streams range from \$70-\$256, while King Airs (which the airport sees a lot of) pay about \$47.



The celebrity golf tournament will fill the airport's ramp.

Michael Golden at Mountain West Aviation is responsible for collecting the fees. He charges an additional overnight fee.

His crew is also tasked with parking all of the aircraft. Some years it looks like every inch of asphalt is covered with a multi-million dollar plane.

This year, with 10 open hangars, it's possible some pilots may opt to store the plane indoors.

"July is our busiest month, but it is around the lake," Golden said. He wouldn't divulge who flies what or any specifics about money he collects during the annual six-day tournament.

The city gets 11 cents of every gallon of fuel that Mountain West sells. In July 2009, that amount totaled \$5,748 – just for the city's coffers.

And not every pilot fuels up in Tahoe.

Nor does every player come via Lake Tahoe Airport. Minden and Reno are other airports most often used.



Flight Deck restaurant at Lake Tahoe Airport has indoor and outdoor seating with views of the runways.

Before jumping in a vehicle headed for Stateline, Diane and Tom Miller hope the golfers and their entourage are hungry. They opened the Flight Deck restaurant last month at the airport.

"We don't have any particular plans for Celebrity Golf. I'm

not sure how we will be affected by the planes landing and the limos picking people up," Diane Miller said.

With the city getting a chunk of the gross from the restaurant, the owners and city officials have their fingers crossed people will be hungry on their way in or out of town.