

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: December 28, 1979

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-79-106 and 107

On November 9, 1979, a Western Airlines B-727 and a Funbirds Flying Club Rockwell Commander AC-112B nearly collided on airway V-66 about 9 miles northeast of Lindbergh Airport in San Diego, California, at 4,500 feet m.s.l. The location is within the designated San Diego Terminal Radar Service Area (TRSA). The Western jet was under the control of San Diego Approach Control on a full instrument approach to Lindbergh Airport, and the Commander was on a VFR night cross-country flight eastbound to Imperial, California. The Commander pilot had just departed Montgomery Airport and was not in contact with San Diego Approach Control, although the pilot was aware that he was flying through airspace where positive separation from other aircraft was available if he chose to ask for that service.

On November 18, 1979, another midair near-collision occurred on the same airway about 1 1/4 miles west of the San Diego sports stadium. A Pacific Southwest Airlines (PSA) B-727 was being radar vectored for an approach to Lindbergh Airport by San Diego Approach Control. The approach controller issued a "conflicting traffic" advisory to the PSA flightcrew, which identified the traffic as being "right below us." The approach controller did not know about the conflicting traffic until a few seconds before the two aircraft passed each other. The aircraft was a Piper Twin Commanche PA-30, which had taken off from Montgomery Airport on a VFR flight en route to Imperial. This aircraft had attempted to contact San Diego Approach Control about 1 minute before the PSA jet passed near it, but the pilot had not been radar-identified until moments before the near-collision which took place at an altitude of about 6,200 feet m.s.l. The PSA captain said that, if the controller had not issued the conflicting traffic advisory, his aircraft would have collided with the Piper. This midair near-collision also occurred within the San Diego TRSA. In neither case was the small aircraft equipped with a Mode-C altitude encoding transponder.

The Safety Board is concerned that these two similar incidents again demonstrate the potential for another catastrophic midair collision in the San Diego area. While recognizing that the Federal Aviation Administration's recent Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) 79-AWE-17 will in all likelihood ultimately result in the establishment of a Terminal Control Area in San Diego, the Safety Board believes that this action does not satisfy the immediate need for segregating controlled, high-performance aircraft and uncontrolled aircraft in the high-density San Diego area, which includes several Airport Traffic Areas in proximity to one another. The busiest of these facilities, Montgomery Airport, lies directly below the arrival flightpath of commercial aircraft approaching San Diego's Air Carrier Terminal, Lindbergh Field. Airway V-66 runs directly through the center of the San Diego terminal area, and is a heavily used eastbound route for aircraft departing airports in the San Diego area.

The Safety Board believes that serious danger continues to exist for a catastrophic aircraft collision in the San Diego area, and that preventive action must be taken immediately. Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Immediately exercise its emergency authority and impose mandatory requirements that all pilots communicate with San Diego approach control and receive an appropriate ATC clearance, on a first-come, first-served basis, before entering the San Diego Terminal Radar Service Area. This should be identified as an interim action until a Terminal Control Area is implemented. (Class I, Urgent Action) (A-79-106)

Expedite the establishment and implementation of a Group II TCA at San Diego, with the special requirement that aircraft utilizing the airspace be equipped with an operating Mode-C Altitude Encoding Transponder. (Class I, Urgent Action) (A-79-107).

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations.



James B. King
Chairman