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Long Island Residents Complain About Jet Noise

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Increase in low-flying jets rattles 13 LI communities

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The increased noise has re-energized the Town-Village Aircraft Safety Noise Abatement Committee — a 40-year-old coalition of Hempstead communities — to push the FAA and the Port Authority to provide some relief.

The group represents nearly 150,000 people living in Atlantic Beach, Cedarhurst, East Williston, Floral Park, Garden City, Hewlett Harbor, Island Park, Lawrence, Long Beach, New Hyde Park, Stewart Manor, Valley Stream and Woodsburgh.

In April and May, 22L accounted for more than a third of Kennedy arrivals on its eight runway approaches — which is about normal for that runway at that time of year, according to the most-recent Port Authority reports. It was used for nearly half of the arrivals between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. in April, the most recent month for which data is available.

Use of Runway 22L increased from 19.8 percent of overnight landings on the eight runways in 2007 to 24.6 percent in 2009, according to Port Authority reports. In 2010, construction projects closed two runways for months, increasing flights on all of the remaining six runways.

According to the 2000 Kennedy Tower Agreement — an aircraft noise abatement plan developed by the Port Authority, the Aviation Development Council, the Air Transport Association and the Federal Aviation Ad-

ministration Eastern Region — Runway 22L should not be used for arrivals between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. unless traffic, delays, weather or construction prevent the use of every other runway. That agreement making 22L the runway of last resort at night is based on the large swath of residential areas in its flight path.

Garden City Trustee Laurence Quinn, a noise abatement committee member, acknowledged the challenge of having several communities fighting the same noise problems: A solution for one community could mean sending planes over another. What all the communities want, he said, is "an equitable distribution of flights."

The local officials want arriving aircraft to rotate among all JFK runway approaches as much as possible. They also want a ban on lower-flying planes and the reduction of late-night arrivals on Runway 22L by distributing them to other runways.

"Residents understand there will always be rotations. . . What we don't understand is when the weather permits, why there isn't a frequent runway rotation," said Floral Park Village Trustee Mary-Grace Tomecki, a committee member.

Neither the Port Authority, which is responsible for noise complaints, nor the FAA, which handles low-flying aircraft concerns, would specifically address Runway 22L usage.

"We want to know why they are doing what they are not supposed to be doing," in using 22L so often late at night, Quinn said.

Arlene Salac, an FAA spokeswoman, said runway usage is determined by factors such as wind direction, weather conditions, airport construc-
Most jets landing at Kennedy’s Runway 22L rely on visually guided approaches. Residents of 13 Nassau communities want to require pilots to make instrument-guided landings, which allow planes to come in at higher altitudes, thereby minimizing noise.

Current guidelines recommend planes fly at altitudes of 2,500 feet over East Williston, 2,000 feet over Garden City, and 1,400 feet over Valley Stream and Elmont as they approach the airport, according to the FAA’s Salac.

But the average altitude in April above East Williston, for example, was 2,119 feet, according to a Port Authority report. One flight flew 1,391 feet over East Williston.

Salac said air traffic controllers are required to “monitor each aircraft and ensure they are at the required altitude.”