

Montana and the Sky

Montana Department of Transportation

Aeronautics Division

Vol. 77, No. 2 February 2026

Montana Aviation Conference

Please welcome 2026 Keynote Speaker Art Mortvedt

In 2013, Alaskan pilot Art Mortvedt piloted his single-engine Cessna 185, the Polar Pumpkin, across the Canadian Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories, and the Province of Nunavut to the North Pole. This journey bestowed upon Art the unique distinction of having flown a light, single-engine aircraft to both the geographic North and South Poles.

He encountered many challenges and rewards along the way: meeting and interacting with the Indigenous peoples of the North; transporting scientific experiments; navigating difficult terrain; and contending with the often-severe weather conditions characteristic of the polar regions.

Art grew up in rural North Dakota and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Dickinson State University in Dickinson, North Dakota. He drove his faithful Volkswagen Bug to Alaska in January 1974, kicking off the first of many adventures to come. Art accepted a teaching job in the northwest Alaska Inupiat Eskimo village of Shungnak, which lies north of the Arctic Circle and can only be reached by river or by air. This prompted him to learn to fly. He has since logged approximately 7,000 flight hours on floats, wheels and skis.

He owns and operates a remote Brooks Range wilderness lodge and is a registered Alaska hunting guide.

Art's interest in the environment, science, and the cultures of the polar regions has led to over twenty trips to Antarctica, as well as visits to numerous northern regions. He is an elected member of the Explorers Club in New York and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in London. He has received the Antarctic Service Medal and the Explorers Club Lowell Thomas Award in 2009, with the theme of "Exploring Risk." He currently resides in Manley, Alaska.

Art will be the Saturday evening banquet closing keynote speaker. He will be speaking about his journeys to the ends of the earth and the many interesting stops made along the way.



Photos courtesy of Art Mortvedt.

2026 Montana Aviation Conference Registration Open

The Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM) is pleased to announce the 41st Montana Aviation Conference. The conference will be held in Billings February 26-28, 2026, at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center.

The conference offers three days of speakers, seminars, workshops, awards ceremonies, business meetings, comradery, and social events.

It is an opportunity for those from the aviation community to connect, learn, and exchange ideas and information.

Around 500 participants are expected this year.

If you are interested in saving money on registration fees, check out the "take off to landing" package on the registration website.

Lodging is available at a special rate by calling the Billings Hotel and Convention Center in Billings at 406-248-7151.

Mention the Montana Aviation Conference for discounted room rates.

For more information, contact the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Aeronautics Division at 406-444-2506 or email katkins@mt.gov.

Vendor and attendee conference registration may be completed by scanning the QR code:





2026 Aviation Awareness Art Contest



The MDT Aeronautics Division's Aviation Awareness Art Contest allows students to broaden their knowledge and promote interest in careers within the aviation. The contest is open to all students in K - 12 in public, private, and home schools. Students should research aviation in Montana and then illustrate a subject of their choosing.

For more details and download the flyer, visit: mdt.mt.gov/aviation/events.aspx

Submissions will be accepted until April 10th.

Artwork must have a Montana aviation theme.

For more details and to download the full flyer, go to mdt.mt.gov/aviation/events.aspx or scan the QR Code.

For further information, please contact Barbara Barnum
406-444-2506 or bbarnum@mt.gov



Do You Need Airport Parts or Supplies?

Spring is coming and it is time to repair any items on airports that winter operations may have disrupted. The Montana Aeronautics resale program is a cost saving parts program that supplies common airport equipment and replacement items to Montana airports. The Division purchases inventory in bulk and then resells it at competitive prices to both public use and private use airports in the state, helping local airport managers stretch limited budgets while maintaining safety and reliability.

Items available through the program typically include runway and taxiway markers, lighting components, windsocks and hardware, safety signs, and other day to day operational supplies needed to keep airports in service. Airports can browse the catalog online and place orders directly through the Aeronautics Inventory Resale service, which is integrated with the same portal used for pilot and aircraft registration.

To browse the online catalog go to:

mdt.mt.gov/aviation/resale-program.aspx
or scan the QR Code



New AOM President Needed

The Aviation Organizations of Montana (AOM) is seeking its next president as longtime leader Mike Vivion prepares to step down after years of dedicated service. The AOM represents Montana's aviation "alphabet groups" as a united voice and serves as the coordinating and host body for the annual Montana Aviation Conference, bringing together aviators from every corner of the state.

If you or someone you know is interested in running for AOM president and helping guide the future of aviation in Montana, please contact Mike at michael.vivion@gmail.com. Officers will be elected during the Montana Aviation Conference in Billings at the end of the month, so now is the time to step forward and get involved!

2026 Winter Survival Clinic Recap

The 2026 Aviation Winter Survival Clinic again proved why this program is such a valuable part of Montana's safety culture. In January, the MDT Aeronautics Division brought a couple dozen pilots and passengers together in the Pintler Mountains near Anaconda for an intensive three day experience focused on staying alive and thinking clearly after an off airport landing in winter conditions.

Led by survival expert Brett Stoffel of Emergency Response International and Matt Lindberg of MDT Aeronautics, participants rotated between interactive classroom discussions and field demonstrations that emphasized mindset, shelter, fire, first aid, and signaling. The group practiced building and improving survival kits, examined real world case studies, and learned how to prioritize actions in the critical first hours after an emergency.

The highlight of the weekend came when each attendee built an improvised shelter and then spent the night in it, testing both skills and gear in true mountain winter conditions. The following morning debrief gave everyone a chance to share what worked and what they would do differently next time while receiving practical feedback from instructors and fellow participants.

By the end of the clinic, participants left not only with sharper techniques, but with renewed confidence in their ability to cope with a cold weather emergency in Montana's backcountry. Thank you to everyone who braved the snow, embraced the challenge, and helped make this year's Winter Survival Clinic such a success.



Montana Aircraft Mechanic Refresher & IA Renewal Seminar

The MDT Aeronautics Division is offering its Mechanic Refresher and Inspection Authorization (IA) Renewal Seminar concurrently with the 2026 Montana Aviation Conference in Billings (Friday and Saturday). 18 approved hours of training will be offered this year over the two days. Any combination of topics offered will meet the required 8-hour minimum for IA renewal.

Conference registration is required to attend the IA renewal seminar. See page 1 for registration details.

Note: You do not need to be an A&P or an IA to attend and learn!

For more information regarding Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspection Authorization renewal requirements and forms, visit: faa.gov/about/office_org/field_offices/fsdo/hln/

Note: The FAA's preferred method for submitting IA renewals is via the Integrated Certification and Rating Application (IACRA) website. To register for an account go to: iacra.faa.gov

AOPA Rusty Pilots Seminar at the Montana Aviation Conference.

AOM is hosting an Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) Rusty pilot's seminar at the Montana Aviation Conference in Billings. The Rusty Pilots Seminar, presented by Meg Godlewski, will be held on Saturday, February 28, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Montana Aviation Conference in Billings.

Attendance is free for AOPA members. You can join the AOPA for \$89 and attend for free or pay \$89 without joining.

To register for the Rusty Pilot Seminar, visit aopa.org/destinations/event/1614 or scan the QR Code



2026 Flight Instructor Refresher Clinic

The Montana Aeronautics Flight Instructor Refresher Clinic (FIRC) is an annual FAA-approved course designed to help certified flight instructors (CFIs) renew their instructor certificates and stay current with the latest in aviation training and safety practices. The 2026 clinic will be in Helena at the DoubleTree Hotel

February 6 - 7, 2026, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. both days.

Lodging is available at the DoubleTree by Hilton located at 22 N Last Chance Gulch. Call (406) 443-2200 and mention FIRC for the state rate. Tuition is \$75, with a \$25 discount for pilots registered in Montana.

For more information, contact Matt Lindberg at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov. To register, scan the QR Code:



Calendar of Events

February 6 - 7 - FIRC. Helena. Double Tree by Hilton. For more information contact Matt Lindberg at 406-444-2506 or mdtad@mt.gov

February 12 - Blackfoot Aviation, Missoula. General Aviation (GA) Seminars - *Backcountry Flying* with speaker Aaron Foster. Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information contact Kendon Campell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.

February 26 - 28 - Montana Aviation Conference. Billings. Billings Hotel and Convention Center. For more information, to volunteer or be a vendor at the conference, please contact Kelly Atkins at 406-444-9580 or email katkins@mt.gov.

March 1 - Annual Aircraft and Pilot registration renewals for 2026 are due.

March 5 - Blackfoot Aviation, Missoula. GA Seminars - *Visual Flight Rules (VFR) Refresh* with speaker James Wassem. Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information contact Kendon Campell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.

March 12 - Blackfoot Aviation, Missoula. GA Seminars - *Instrument Flight Rules (IFR)* with speaker Tim Mead. Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information contact Kendon Campell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.

April 9 - Blackfoot Aviation, Missoula. GA Seminars - *Montana Accident Case Studies* with speaker Jeff Vercoe. (FAA Safety with WINGS credit). Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information contact Kendon Campell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.

May 14 - Blackfoot Aviation, Missoula. GA Seminars - *Density Altitude/Aircraft Performance* with speaker Kurt Kleiner. (FAA Safety with WINGS credit). Starts 6:30 p.m. at hanger #3 of the East LZ hangers. 4198 Corporate Way. For more information contact Kendon Campell at kendonc@blackfootaviation.net or 406-519-3757.

May 15 -17 - Cub Doctor. Roundup. Clyde Smith Jr aka "The Cub Doctor" returns to Montana for his Fabric Piper Restoration and Maintenance Workshop Seminar. Will be held at Bar T Aero Hangar #15 (RPX) in Roundup. For more information and to register, contact Clint Worman at qccranch@rangeweb.net. Limited seating available so call ASAP!

June 13 - Townsend Fly-In. Sponsored by the Broadwater County Airport Board. Breakfast served for a fee and proceeds go to the local 4H club. For more information, contact Jess Lancello at 406-860-5355 or jessarnold@hotmail.com.

June 20 - Big Timber Fly-In and Car Show. Breakfast starts at 7 a. m. followed by a pig roast lunch starting at 10 a.m. Breakfast and lunch are free. Donations accepted. For more information, contact Kirk Bryan at 406-930-1780.

August 9 - Hysham Fly-In. Breakfast available for a small donation 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. For more information, contact Ruth Baue at 406-342-5328.

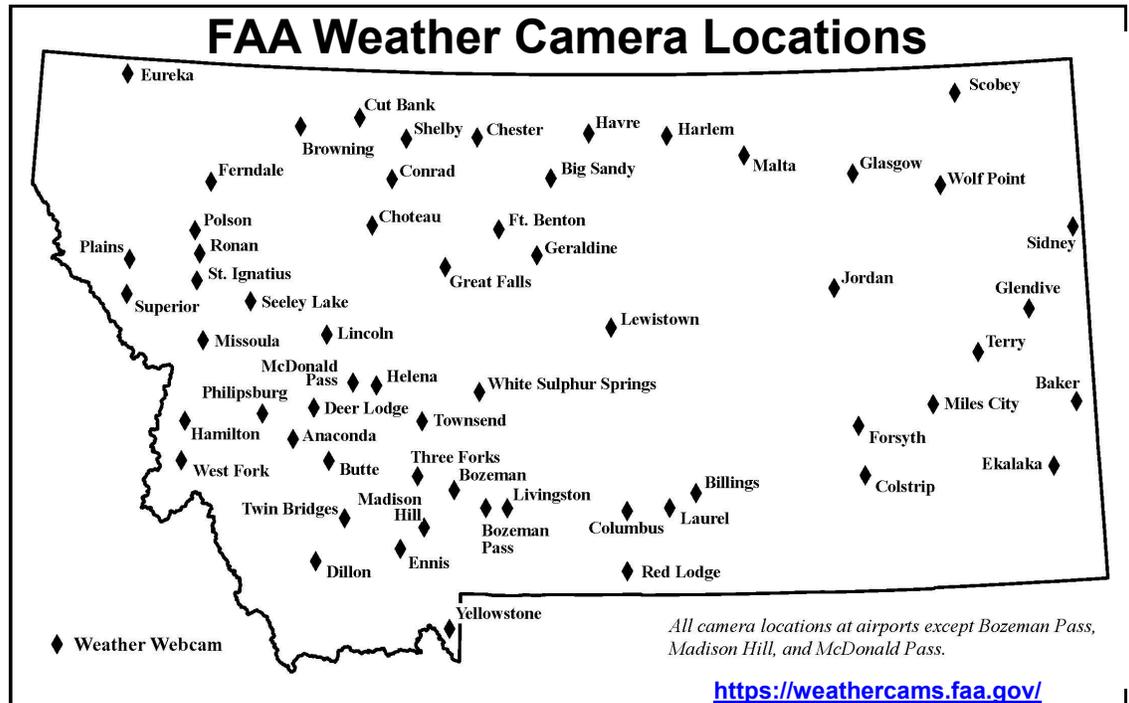
MDT Aeronautics Division

PO Box 200507

2630 Airport Road

**Thank you for
reading
*Montana and
the Sky.*
Fly Safe!**

To manage your *Montana and the Sky* newsletter subscription preferences or to sign-up for the e-newsletter please email mdtad@mt.gov or call 406-444-2506.



To request an alternative accessible format of this document, please contact MDT's ADA Coordinator at 406-444-5416, Montana Relay Service at 711, or by email at mmaze@mt.gov

This document is printed at state expense. Information on the cost of producing this publication may be obtained by contacting the Department of Administration.