

**From:** [Simmons, Jeff \(FAA\)](#)  
**To:** [Eric Gutierrez](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Yellowstone Air Service- Statement Regarding 558RA Incident @ KLVM  
**Date:** Thursday, January 25, 2024 9:36:45 AM  
**Attachments:** [image003.png](#)

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**From:** Gabriel Chandler [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 25, 2024 9:27 AM  
**To:** Simmons, Jeff (FAA) [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Yellowstone Air Service- Statement Regarding 558RA Incident @ KLVM

Good Morning Jeff,

My apologies on getting this back to you so late. I have been struggling with the reality of the boards possible retaliation given my statement and overall opinion on the incident that took place on 1-11-24 with N558RA.

I will summarize what took place on the day of the incident, and try to paint the picture of the backstory that lead to the contributing factor.

I was notified by Matt Lindberg of the MT state board of Aeronautics the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> that there was a 406 ELT going off at the KLVM. I immediately called my manager (Ryan) and asked if N558RA had landed since the time of the ELT alert and their scheduled arrival coincided. Ryan had stated they had gone around and told me he had even called the company to in attempt to see if they had gone around and diverted. The charter company stated they saw them at 7500'. I asked him to please call the pilots on UNICOM, to which there was no answer. I then asked Ryan to get in the truck and do a drive around and check the ends of the runways. As he was on the phone with me he found the pilots walking up the hill on the very west end of the RW. It was at this point I called Matt Lindberg back and stated 558RA was in fact down, and that all occupants were accounted for and walking. Matt asked if there were emergency personnel on the way, to which I replied, no. He said he would get them headed over and I would get a NOTAM filed to close the airport. After I had filed the NOTAM I called Ryan and asked if the RW had been plowed, to which he responded, No. It was at this point I asked him to start taking pictures and upon my review of the RW conditions, there appeared to be around an inch of snow built up on the surface.(It should be noted that later in the day when certain board members arrived that they were upset that I had filed a notam to close the airport)

Now in no way am trying to state that I believe the incident occurred purely on the fact of the runway contamination. However, it most certainly was a contributing factor. One that could have easily been mitigated had the Airport Board done their job and hit it with a plow first thing in the morning. The arrival was public on the app, FlightAware, from the previous nights scheduling.. They Board also has a paid subscription to FlightAware purely for flight tracking. Plowing at the

airport so far this year has been abysmal to say the least. Big windrows and ice chunks have been left, taxiway corners have been built up to the point there could be an occurrence should a plane be taxiing by. It did get to the point earlier this year where we have had departures delayed, due to no one coming up to plow. If I ask, I get no response, so essentially, I give the boards number to the clients and have them call the board to get plowing done. It got to the point that YAS had to go out and buy its own snowblower just to ensure planes could get to the fuel island.

Now to really paint the picture, let me start off by saying, I eat, sleep, and breathe this airport. I bought this business in 2020, put my life savings on the line to see this airport grow. I was grandfathered in as the Airport Manager upon the purchase from the previous owner and for the first 2 years of maintaining the airport, it really did seem to have fresh life breathed into what was primarily a fly over airport. Fuel trucks were purchased, self serve fuel for av-gas was installed, recently deice capabilities were added, a new FBO area was built with an adequate lounge area for the pilots etc. Needless to say, I ( Yellowstone Air Service) is 100% vested in the success of this airport. YAS oversaw the mowing of the grass runways, and RW thresholds, and plowing. If there was ever a chance for an arrival, whether it was charter or Med Flight, myself or one of my people would be out plowing to help ensure the RW, taxiways, and turnarounds were safe and manageable, even at all hours of the night.

When the maintenance/manager contract came up in Dec of '22 the relationship between the board and YAS had dissolved to the point of them no longer renewing the contract for management with YAS, but they also did not have any kind of a plan for our replacement. The board eventually decided they would maintain the airport. The reasoning behind the boards decision was largely due to the boards implementation of landing fees which I felt were egregious and in no way incentivizing to the airports jet traffic. I was being asked to collect the fees from the arrivals, but upon doing a thorough market analysis for landing fees for the area, I found out how out of touch they really were. I communicated this upstream to the board that an airport our size, with our services, should not be asking for that kind of money. It was going to force traffic away. Essentially, I felt it was in poor taste to go from no landing fees to some of the highest in the state in a years time. Frustration from multiple clients, NBAA, and even local pilots were communicated to the board, but all seemed to fall on deaf ears. The elastic outcome of YAS's voicing an opinion and not agreeing with the boards decision making have been aspects of retaliation that are extremely frustrating. It has been difficult to watch an airport that was maintained with such pride by myself and my team dissolve by the lack of steward ship.

Just one example of this took place this summer when one of our clients was set to arrive in a G550. I believe it was around August and the board had finally got around to mowing (Taxiways were 6' tall with weeds) Before the operations started I asked 2 of the board members if they had filed a notam of mowing, to which both replied no. The authority for myself to file NOTAMs at that time had been removed largely due to spite from the board members. I had given a print out for the arrivals that day to one of the board members, and made sure they had at least a radio to monitor UNICOM. As we watched the G550 come into land, we noticed that both mower operators had parked within the safety threshold parallel to RW22 and were outside talking to each other. The G550 landed, and upon speaking with the Capt., found out just how furious he was. The G550 had to side step to avoid them. (If you would like to corroborate this with the actual pilot, I am sure he

would love to talk to you. Brent Schmeck, Cook Canyon Aviation, [REDACTED]

I do not want to sound like some whiny business owner in a pissing match with the airport board, but I fail to see the logic and the sense of pride that they are taking in trying to better maintain this airport. If you were to ask any of the hanger owners or consistent clients that arrive here at KLVM if there has been a decline in the management of KLVM, over that past year, they would all agree. This goes from ratty torn up windsocks being left on for months at a time to our newly installed beacon that has had a burned out red light for the past year.

My incentive in writing this isn't to burn or get back at anyone, its simply to make this airport great, and to have some leadership that values its tenants and the clientele that want to come here.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best Regards,

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[REDACTED]

