DISRUPTING A BAD INDUSTRY HABIT: WHY DESERT JET CENTER REFUSES TO CHARGE SPECIAL EVENT FEES

News / Business aviation

Desert Jet Center, the premier independent full-service executive FBO headquartered at the Jacqueline Cochran Regional Airport (KTRM) in Thermal, California, is taking a clear stand against a growing industry practice: Special Event Fees. A recent aviation industry article highlighted a growing trend with many FBOs during major events like the Super Bowl: FBO Special Event Fees imposed as an additional service charge.

At Desert Jet Center (KTRM), a di?erent approach was chosen. There is no charge of special event fees. Not during peak season. Not during holidays. Not during music festivals. Not during world-class sporting events. And not when the ramp is full, and the radios don't stop. Because for the team, delivering exceptional service during busy periods isn't a premium o?ering; it's the standard.

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Kenn Ricci, Chairman of Flexjet and a widely respected leader in business aviation, has spoken out about the growing number of extra charges across the industry, including FBO special event fees. He has described these fees as a form of gouging that adds unnecessary cost and complexity for operators, noting they can even undermine the convenience factor that drives private aviation usage in the first place. His comments reflect a broader industry conversation about fairness, transparency, and keeping the focus on service rather than add-on charges.

Last week's American Express Golf Tournament and Concert Series in the Coachella Valley brought a significant surge of business and general aviation flights to the valley. A number that continues to grow exponentially year over year. The heavy volume of ramp activity required coordination, teamwork, and heightened attention to safety. For the Desert Jet Center team, it was business as usual.

Operators, pilots, and flight departments know exactly what to expect when they arrive at Desert Jet Center: calm professionalism, attentiveness on the ramp, and a team prepared for volume without sacrificing care.

In the middle of the activity, a pilot took the time to call and say, "Even with everything going on and all the pop-ups, you still provided excellent and safe service. I appreciate everything you do." That feedback speaks louder than any event surcharge ever could. With world-renowned events on the horizon, from the BNP Paribas Open and equestrian competitions at the Desert International Horse Park, to the Coachella and Stagecoach Music Festivals, the desert will again see significant aviation tra?c. While other FBOs implement special event pricing, Desert Jet Center will not, because we believe the times when aviation gets busiest are when customers need predictability the most and not new line items on an invoice.

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As Desert Jet Center CEO Jared Fox stated: "Value isn't just about price. It's about predictability, trust, and performance." And FBO General Manager Roman Mendez adds, "Special moments shouldn't carry special charges." Desert Jet Center doesn't see peak tra?c as an opportunity to charge more. We view it as an opportunity to show customers why they keep coming back.

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