Cold weather causing more air cancellations

By Jennifer Smith
Staff Writer

Cold weather in the Acadiana area continued to cause flight cancellations at the Lafayette Regional Airport Thursday affecting two of the airport's four air carriers.

At the monthly meeting of the Lafayette Regional Airport Commission last night, Director of Aviation Greg Roberts said Continental Express and Atlantic Southeast both had to cancel most of their flights out of Lafayette Thursday.

Local customers have been most affected by the Continental Express cancellations because they offer the only air service from Lafayette to Houston.

As of Thursday, only two flights went from Lafayette to Houston, and one flight had only crew members on board. Both flights had to fly below the clouds, an inefficient method of flying.

The cancellations were prompted by the October fatal crash of an ATR plane in Indiana.

Since December ATR planes have been restricted by the Federal Aviation Administration from flying in icy conditions.

"It's a big disruption at the airport," Roberts said. "But we're not alone. This is affecting other airports."

Roberts said the airport is losing money on enplanements, parking fees, restaurant revenue and other profit-making entities at the airport.

Airport commissioners also learned that Continental Airlines could not reroute any of its jets to make up for the ATR cancellations in Lafayette.

In other business, commissioners approved the use of more than $90,000 from Lafayette Parish funds for parking lot repairs at the airport.

Commissioners also learned of the airport's security inspection, which was conducted last month by FAA inspectors from the New Orleans Civil Aviation Security Field Unit.

The Lafayette airport received a favorable report.