

# Airport sees rebound in October

The rise in passenger traffic followed three months of declines.

By Thomas V. Bona  
ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

ROCKFORD — Byron and Jackie Reeves made their first trip out of Chicago/Rockford International Airport this week, snubbing O'Hare.

The southwestern Wisconsin couple flew to Denver to visit their daughter. They used to make their trips from the huge Chicagoland airport but were lured here by a good price on airfare.

"It's nice. Free parking, that certainly is a plus," Byron Reeves said after checking in. "I like it — just less volume of people. ... There were no lines when we got here."

The airport had its best October this decade, with 6,049 people flying out. It was an increase from September after three straight months of slight decreases.

"We have strong demand to the destinations that people want to go to for both business and leisure, and they continue to fill the planes," said airport Deputy Director Derek Martin. "We should blow past November's numbers" of 7,111 enplanements last year, he said.

He expects to end the year with 85,000 to 90,000 enplanements, the best year since passenger service returned to the airport in 2003. That would be 5,000 to 10,000 more than 2005 and almost double 2004's numbers. An enplanement generally means a round-trip flight, so that could mean almost 200,000 passengers going through the airport this year.

Bob O'Brien, the airport's executive director, said last month he expected traffic to double again in 2007.

Allegiant Air just expanded back to six flights a week to Sanford, Fla., near Orlando, because of increased seasonal demand. Allegiant also starts service to St. Petersburg/Clearwater International

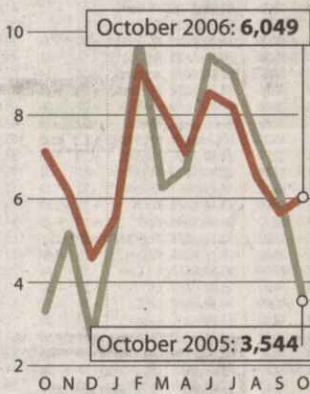


PHOTOS BY ALAN LEÓN | ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR  
An Allegiant Air flight to Orlando takes off Thursday at the Chicago/Rockford International Airport in Rockford. Passenger traffic was up at the airport in October.

## AIR PASSENGER TRAFFIC

Scale in thousands

— 2004 to '05 — '05 to '06



Source: Chicago/Rockford International Airport  
ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

Airport in the Tampa Bay region of Florida on Thursday.

"(Rockford) is definitely one of our top markets, and we look forward to continuing to grow our presence in the community," said Allegiant spokeswoman Tyri Squyres. She said they hope to fly to other destinations but have nothing to announce.

"I hear comments all the time, what an easy, friendly airport it is to use," Squyres said. "We draw pretty broadly. We get a lot of traffic from Madison. People will try to take one of our flights rather than going through a major airport."



Barb Acker of Madison, Wis., boards an Allegiant Air flight to Orlando Thursday at the Chicago/Rockford International Airport in Rockford. "This is much better than O'Hare," said Acker of the airport.

## Airlines

Airlines that serve Chicago/Rockford International Airport:

**Allegiant Air** (to Las Vegas, Orlando and St. Petersburg/Clearwater) — 702-505-8888 or [www.allegiantair.com](http://www.allegiantair.com)

**Apple Vacations** (to Cancun) — [www.applevacations.com](http://www.applevacations.com)

**United Airlines** (to Denver) — 1-800-864-8331 or [www.united.com](http://www.united.com)

Rockford resident Judy Smith flew from here Thursday, even though she would have saved \$100 using O'Hare. That money wasn't worth the extra headaches, she said. She took United Airlines to the Denver hub, connecting to a flight to Alaska.

Aurora resident Mike

Ridgway chose Rockford's airport for his trip to an interview with SkyWest Airlines, the carrier United uses to get people from the Midwest to Denver.

"It's easier than going through O'Hare," he said.

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Revamped runways up to standard

By Thomas V. Bona  
ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

ROCKFORD — A recent report citing Rockford/Chicago International Airport's runways for having required 1,000-safety areas was incorrect, airport officials say.

U.S. Sen Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., whose office released the report, The Associated Press, said last week more than half of commercial airports have at least one runway that does not meet the standard.

But FAA spokeswoman Elizabeth Isham Cory said those are outdated numbers. "This handy little number, I don't know where it came from," she said Thursday. "Most of them have been brought up to date."

Two of Rockford's runways are listed as not having safety areas, a stretch of flat, hard ground that causes planes that overrun runways from crashing.

But according to the Federal Aviation Administration, one has long since been fixed. The other was just recently fixed, airport Executive Director Bob O'Brien added.

Both projects were scheduled soon after O'Brien started here 10 years ago and were constructed when federal money was available.

"I don't need a plan crash in order to correct my shortcomings," O'Brien said Thursday. "That's the right thing to do because that's the standard."

Cory said most runways are within 90 percent of standard. She said that of Rockford's runways, two approaches met the standard and the fourth is expected to once a recently completed project is measured. A fence and a fence were moved and the ground was leveled to create the buffer.

The issue received national attention in December when a plane overran a runway at Midway International Airport, plowed through the street and killed a

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