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Oconee County Sheriff's Office Pilot Sgt. Tyrel Woodring, left, and an unidentified helper, recently put the sheriff's helicopter through its

annual maintenance inspection at the Oconee County Regional Airport. Work will begin soon on additional hangars at the airport.

New hangars to boost revenue at airport

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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SENECA — A company chosen to construct eight new hangars at the Oconee County Regional Airport must wait for state regulators to issue a stormwater permit before it can begin work.

Once built, the new hangars are projected to boost rental revenues and fuel sales at the airport.

Airport Director Kevin Short said he's hopeful of getting the permit in the next week or so.

However, Short said work on building the T-hangars would not begin until he's verified the permit is legiti-

mate.

County officials learned a hard lesson last year when a phony permit was submitted for the airport's runway extension project.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control shut down the runway project for months when it became aware of the falsified document.

Although the runway is completed and fully functional now, Oconee faces a messy three-way lawsuit to deal with damages caused by the delays in finishing the project.

Short is not about to fall into a similar trap with the hangar

project.

"When I get that permit I'm going to call and ask to speak with the person that signed the permit," Short said.

County Council approved a \$380,000 contract to Trehel Corp. in March to build the hangars.

Oconee currently has 40 hangars at the airport that are fully occupied, and there's a waiting list of aircraft owners waiting for a vacancy.

Once the new hangars are built, rental revenue is projected to increase almost 24 percent from \$90,370 last year to \$112,000 in the new budget.

The additional hangars would

bring more planes and aviation activity to the airport that also is expected to boost aviation and jet fuel sales.

Oconee generated almost \$202,000 in aviation fuel sales in last year's budget with that number expected to top \$278,000 in the 2011-12 budget. Jet fuel sales are projected to in-

crease 22 percent from \$245,000 last year to \$299,000.

Of Oconee's 40 T-hangars, 27 are leased at a rate of \$215 a month and 13 older units with pull-down doors at \$145 a month. The eight new hangars would bring in \$250 a month each.

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