

Airplane maintenance firm doubling space at Mather

MARK LARSON / STAFF WRITER

Fast-growing Mather Aviation in January will move into a leased hangar at Mather Airport that doubles its former space for jet maintenance and aircraft storage.

Meanwhile, manager Victor Cushing is buying out partner John Clanton for \$1.2 million, in a verbal deal still in the works. Clanton owns Trajen Inc., Sacramento County's designated refueler at Mather.

"There's a pretty wide and strong customer base there between large and small companies," Clanton said. "I'm selling out all my interest in it to Victor. We've settled on general terms. We don't have a deal done yet."

Cushing said the move from a 40,000-square-foot space to an 86,000-square-foot hangar, leased from Sacramento County, is being made to accommodate the company's growth.

Mather Aviation now has two other locations: Hayward Airport and McClellan Airport, with 38 of its 48 employees working at Mather. Cushing just hired two mechanics, and expects work load will prompt him to hire four more over the next six months. The company has annual sales of \$6 million.

Clanton and Cushing started the jet maintenance business in 1996, with Trajen folding in Rancho Murieta Aviation, which was run by Cushing.

Ever since, company revenue has grown by "at least 50 percent" from the prior year, Cushing said, adding "after Sept. 11, it grew even more."

A shift in business: Corporate jet flying increased in the wake of the terrorist



Victor Cushing, who is buying his partner's share of expanding Mather Aviation for \$1.2 million: "Mather is growing by leaps and bounds"

DENNIS McCOY /
SACRAMENTO BUSINESS
JOURNAL

attack on the United States two years ago, because many companies saw traveling via commercial airlines as a less dependable option. They bought jets individually and jointly, and chartered them with greater frequency. That shift has continued to play out, boosting service revenue of corporate flying at general aviation airports such as Mather.

"Mather is growing by leaps and bounds," said Cushing. "When I moved here in 1996, there would be one or two transient aircraft a day. Now there are at

least 10 a day." Those jets, he said, are flying in and out to conduct local business.

And as the only jet maintenance company at the airport, Mather Aviation has had plenty of maintenance work to keep its wrenches turning.

Mather Aviation's growth is a welcome sight to county airports deputy director Rob Leonard. "We're really pleased," he said. "He's a service center for a number of different aircraft."

The company is certified to maintain jets built by a handful of private aircraft

manufacturers, including Raytheon Co., Cessna Aircraft Co. and Mooney Aerospace Corp. Ltd.

Beyond corporate aircraft maintenance at Mather, the company maintains airlines that feed the big cargo carriers such as UPS and Airborne. At McClellan it maintains two Boeing 737s.

The new hangar will provide enough room for 30 light planes plus maintenance. Trajen will keep the space Mather Aviation is vacating as lease space for aircraft storage, Cushing said.