



## 2003 > Palmdale

1971 Palmdale Regional Airport

**Background:** Aerial view of PMD property, including USAF Plant 42 runway, 2001.  
**Inset:** Passenger terminal, 2001.

# PMD

## Poised for Growth

As early as 1915, a chalk-marked runway northeast of Palmdale acted as an emergency airfield. During the 1940s, the property was owned by the Palmdale Irrigation District, which dubbed it “United States Palmdale Airport.” In 1942, the airport secured approval from the Civic Aeronautics Authority, the Works Progress Administration and the U.S. Army for a \$35,000 expansion project.

Former Marine General William F. Fox, the director of the county’s department of aviation, conducted an airport survey in 1950, which recommended making Palmdale a 5,000-acre county airport. Fox pointed out that 3,825 aircraft landed that year carrying more than 14,000 passengers. However, the following year, the county sold the airfield to the U.S. Air Force for a jet aircraft testing center.

With the Korean War going on, negotiations began between the Cities of Palmdale and Los Angeles, the USAF and the U.S. Department of Defense for the Los Angeles Department of Airports (now Los Angeles World Airports) to take over the airport. However, it was not until the late 1960s that the USAF approved commercial flights. In November 1970, LAWA began purchasing over 17,000 acres of land adjacent to USAF Plant 42.

The Palmdale Air Terminal was dedicated on June 29, 1971, adjacent to the Air Force runways. The 9,000-

square-foot terminal still remains and was renovated during the late 1990s. It is capable of handling up to 300,000 passengers annually and features two aircraft gates, ample ramp space for additional aircraft, two taxiways to access the Air Force runways from the terminal, and over 300 parking spaces directly outside the terminal.

A series of commuter airlines provided regional air service intermittently from 1971 to 1998. In 1989, LAWA and the USAF entered into a 25-year Joint Use Agreement for military and civil aircraft operations at Plant 42, which stipulates that LAWA will not construct another separate airport unless civil aircraft use at Plant 42 exceeds a three-month average of 200 daily operations, with provisions for operations to be raised to 400 per day.

A Master Plan is currently underway to guide the development of the airport and to define its role in the regional airport system over the next 25 years. Palmdale Regional Airport is poised for growth and LAWA is working with the City of Palmdale, the Antelope Valley business community, and the USAF to further develop its potential. The population of the area surrounding PMD makes passenger service from the airport appealing. About 625,000 residents now live in the Antelope and Santa Clarita Valleys, including portions of San Bernardino and Inyo Counties. The airport is approximately 50 miles northeast of the Los Angeles Civic Center.