



Full-Scale Emergency Exercise at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport Helps Test and Improve Emergency Response

by Pamela Powell

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MASCOUTAH – A full-scale emergency exercise, featuring approximately 70 first responders and local volunteer actors, was recently conducted at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport, with the goal of testing and improving local emergency response. The exercise

took place from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Sept. 26 and featured multiple agencies and organizations working together to respond to a fictional aircraft mishap. Full-scale emergency exercises of this nature are conducted every three years by MidAmerica St. Louis Airport and other airports to comply with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements for FAR Part 139 certification.

The fictional scenario was centered around an aircraft encountering multiple bird strikes during flight and experiencing a hard landing upon return to the airport, leading to simulated structural damage and fire that resulted in several injuries and fatalities. The aircraft, represented by a Scott Air Force Base KC-135, was staged on the runway prior to the start of the exercise. First responders worked quickly to respond to the crash site and rescue the passengers from the fuselage, which in the fictional scenario had fractured upon landing. The fuselage for the rescue portion was actually represented by two buses. Several emergency vehicles worked to put the fictional fire out, and the injured passengers, played by volunteer actors, were treated by first responders. While the exercise was taking place, access to MidAmerica St. Louis Airport was restricted to ensure public safety.

“The full-scale emergency exercise went well, and we appreciate all the local agencies and organizations working together with our team to demonstrate that we have the ability to handle an aircraft emergency,” said Darren James, who serves as Interim Director of MidAmerica St. Louis Airport and oversaw the exercise. “We obviously never want something like this to happen at the airport, but we need to be ready in case it does. We have mutual aid emergency responders nearby, and they demonstrated during the exercise how to effectively partner with us and help us if an emergency like this does take place.”

Multiple organizations and agencies collaborated during the Sept. 26 exercise and demonstrated timely and succinct communication of critical information, effective coordination between each other and the ability to operate in a cohesive incident command structure. They also properly coordinated transfer of documentation to the correct authorities and accounted for all passengers. Those organizations and agencies that had first responders and volunteers participating in the exercise include MidAmerica St. Louis Airport, Scott Air Force Base Fire Department, Mascoutah Emergency Medical Services, MedStar Emergency Medical Services, O’Fallon Fire Department, New Baden Fire Department, St. Clair County Sheriff’s Department, St. Clair County Emergency Management Agency and St Clair County Health Department.

“This tri-annual exercise is very important – not only for MidAmerica St. Louis Airport but for our local emergency response teams as well,” said St. Clair County Board

Chairman Mark Kern. “I’m pleased the exercise was a success and am happy we had the opportunity to test our local response efforts to ensure St. Clair County is prepared for any unforeseen incidents of this nature at the airport.”

For more information about MidAmerica St. Louis Airport, visit www.flymidamerica.com.

MidAmerica St. Louis Airport

MidAmerica St. Louis Airport is located in Mascoutah, Illinois, in the eastern portion of the St. Louis metropolitan area. Passenger service to multiple destinations is offered by Allegiant. Major multimodal rail and inland port centers are located within 22 miles of the airport, which also enjoys easy access to five interstate highways via I-64. With parallel runways of 8,000 and 10,000 feet, the airport can handle simultaneous take-offs and landings in all conditions, minimizing delays. It has an annual capacity of 200,000 operations. Tenants include Boeing, which has an aircraft manufacturing facility at the airport; North Bay Produce, an international, grower-owned, year-round, fresh produce marketing and distribution cooperative headquartered in Traverse City, Mich.

MidAmerica is a Joint Use Airport partnering with Scott AFB, the home to US Transportation Command, a multi service organization, and Air Mobility Command, the USAF’s component command for airlift. MidAmerica and the 375th Air Mobility Wing operate Scott AFB/MidAmerica St. Louis Airport.