

Airport report

Preparing for Emergencies

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Director of Aviation

Preparation for emergencies is essential at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. It is important for the safety of our passengers and our staff. Our airport, like other airports in the nation, routinely conducts training exercises simulating different scenarios that may one day pose a threat to the airport. These scenarios can range from natural disasters to man-made threats. These emergency exercises are mandatory to remain in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration training requirements for airports. In addition to compliance, it is crucial for airport personnel and supporting emergency responders to test their readiness through an exercise on a regular basis to ensure they are fully prepared in the event of an incident. Regardless if an airport is developing a plan, testing an existing one or updating policies and procedures, the effective execution and evaluation of an exercise is key in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the emergency plan.

Recently, the airport conducted a “table-top” exercise (TTX) designed to evaluate policies and procedures of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) FAR Part 139 requirements and the Airport Security AVSEC Contingency plan. A TTX involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting ; the Airport also conducts a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline full scale exercise (FSE) involving a “boots on the ground” response complete with role players as perpetrators and victims every 3 years. The purpose of this TTX was to identify concepts and objectives and to delineate the roles and responsibilities of participants in planning, conducting and evaluating the exercise. The objectives of the exercise were:

- Evaluate the Airport’s Emergency Response Capabilities
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the Emergency Plan
- Exercise the Airport’s Mutual Aid response
- Test and validate the Airport Security AVSEC Plan and related information sharing protocols
- Evaluate effective communication between jurisdictions and agencies to monitor activities during an incident

The TTX participants were varied and included: Airport Staff, Air Carriers, Airport Tenants, Law Enforcement, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Mutual Aid Organizations, Local Emergency First Responders, and Federal Agencies. The scenario for this exercise involved the threat of an unnamed terrorist organization planning to use a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) on an unknown target within the Gulf Region.

The timeline was from 11 p.m. to 1 p.m. the following day. At the conclusion of the exercise, participants were given an opportunity to discuss the exercise and complete an evaluation feedback form.

Planning for a TTX or FSE involves a number of man-hours and personnel with the expertise to develop and monitor the exercise. In the past, an outside firm specializing in safety exercises was contracted to assist in the planning and oversight of the Airport training exercise. For this particular TTX, the NOAB Security & Operations staff, representatives from the Jefferson Parish Sheriff office and the Federal TSA officials under the guidance of NOAB Deputy Director and COO Walter Krygowski planned and conducted the TTX, saving the Airport the outside expenditure while providing a quality exercise.

In other news, the airport is beginning to wrap up some of the \$300 million dollar capital improvement projects. In October, we held a special ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of the Concourse D Expansion. It adds 6 new gates to the existing 6 gates on the concourse. A major safety project from the capital project list that has been completed is our new Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting (ARFF) Facility, located to the west of the old firehouse. For many years, the airport firemen and emergency medical technicians (EMT) have operated out of an antiquated and constrained facility that did not allow for expansion. They will now work out of their brand new \$12 million dollar structure that adequately houses the new fire-trucks that are unique to airport emergency firefighting. The ARFF will also provide a setting for mutual aid training for local jurisdictions.

In closing, let me say that we prepare for events that we hope will never happen, but if they do our training and new facilities will help our airport team respond in an effective way.

We are prepared. ✈



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*Also, view “Airport Alive” on the airport website, www.flymsy.com and you can now follow the airport on Facebook at [facebook.com/MSYAirport](https://www.facebook.com/MSYAirport) and Twitter @NO_Airport. **Be a volunteer at the airport. To find out how, click on Ambassador on the airport website.***