Exercise Tests PHL Airport’s Emergency Preparedness

*Simulated aircraft accident puts emergency response plan in action*

PHILADELPHIA – THE SCENARIO: An American Airlines Airbus 321 jetliner with 136 souls on board is preparing to land on Runway 9R during a fast-moving thunderstorm at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) when the flight encounters severe wind shear. The crew begins to abort the landing and do a go-around, but a microburst forces the aircraft down onto the runway, breaking it apart and engulfing it in flames. There are numerous casualties.

Following Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards, the Airport’s highest level, Alert 3, is issued, triggering a full-scale emergency response from the Airport, fire-rescue and emergency medical first responders and hospitals across the region, and local, state and federal agencies.

The above scenario was played out in detail on Saturday, September 9, during PHL’s Emergency Preparedness Exercise (EPEX), the official full-scale emergency exercise that FAA requires all certified airports to conduct at least once every three years. While the 2017 EPEX drill was carefully staged, including the use of medical transport helicopters, the exercise gave the Airport an opportunity to test and evaluate its response to a real-life incident.

“We meticulously plan these exercises all the while hoping we never need to implement them in a real-life situation,” said Airport CEO Chellie Cameron. “Responding to a major incident is a massive operation that requires careful coordination among numerous responders and agencies. EPEX gives us the opportunity to practice a simulated incident to make sure we are prepared and that our plan works.”

Official observers from the City, state and federal agencies along with invited guests had the opportunity to view the drill. A group of official evaluators consisting of aviation and first responder professionals walked through the incident site to assess the procedures of responding emergency units.
2/EPEX

The drill itself and the corresponding assessments from aviation professionals enable the Airport to determine the effectiveness of its emergency response procedures and implement changes or enhancements if necessary.

Also participating in the emergency exercise were physician triage and surgical response teams, ambulance services including air ambulance units as well as the American Red Cross and American Airlines.

“I want to thank all of the participants, the emergency responders, observers, evaluators and volunteers who took part in this important exercise,” Cameron said. “It takes a great deal of planning and attention to detail to successfully execute an exercise of this scale, and the professionalism of everyone involved demonstrated that we are prepared to handle any emergency.”

The Airport wishes to thank the following for their participation in the EPEX exercise:

**PHL Emergency Response and Exercise Support Agencies:**

City of Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management  
Philadelphia Airport Fire Department Engine 78  
Philadelphia Fire Department  
Philadelphia Police Department Airport Unit  
Philadelphia International Airport Division of Aviation  
Philadelphia Police Department  
Philadelphia Police Department Counter Terrorism Operations Unit  
Philadelphia Non-Municipal Ambulance Service  
2nd Alarmers of Philadelphia  
City of Philadelphia Regional EMS Office  
Tinicum Township Emergency Management  
Tinicum Township Fire Company  
Tinicum Township Police Department  
Delaware County Citizen Corps  
Delaware County Emergency Management  
Media Fire Company Ambulance  
Norwood Fire Company Ambulance  
Prospect Park Fire Company  
Ridley Park Fire Company  
Springfield Ambulance Corp  
Tinicum Township Fire Company Ambulance Service  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Transportation Security Administration

More
Physician Triage and Surgical Response Team:

Hospital & Health Association of Pennsylvania
Southeastern Pennsylvania Medical Assistance Response Team

Air Ambulance Units:

Life Lion – Hershey Medical Center
New Jersey State Police
Jeffstat – Jefferson Hospital