

Standardizing Airport Incident Management Practices

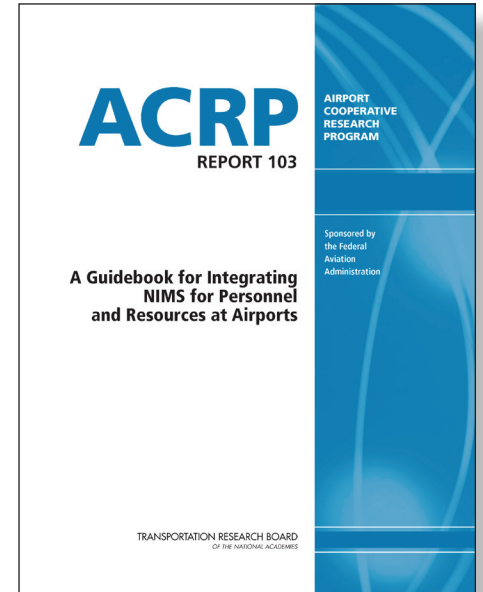
What do Mike Hainsey, executive director of the regional Golden Triangle Airport (GTR) in Columbus, Mississippi, and Kimberly Castro, operations coordinator at the general aviation Kissimmee Gateway Airport (KISM) in Kissimmee, Florida, have in common? Yes, both work at an airport. Both are also passionate about emergency preparedness and incident management at airports. Most importantly, both have high praise for the findings contained in *ACRP Report 103: A Guidebook for Integrating NIMS for Personnel and Resources at Airports*.

NIMS—the National Incident Management System—is a standardized approach for managing incidents involving all threats and hazards, regardless of size, location, or complexity. Developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, NIMS common principles and practices help public and private sector entities work together seamlessly when managing incidents in

order to reduce loss of life, property, and harm to the environment.

ACRP Report 103 provides guidance for the integration of NIMS into airport response plans for incidents, accidents, and events. The guidebook discusses common NIMS and Incident Command System (ICS) terminology, outlines recommended incident command structures for various situations relative to their complexity, and includes sample plans from airports and training outlines. The report includes an appendix with examples of organizational charts.

Mike Hainsey's passion for emergency preparedness derives from his tenure as executive director of GTR, his role as director of search and rescue for the State of Mississippi Civil Air Patrol, and as a panel member of ACRP Project 04-13, "Integrating Community Emergency Response Teams at Airports." Because of his passion and experience, Mike served as chair of ACRP



Project 10-13 that oversaw the development of *ACRP Report 103*.

"Many airports are already familiar with NIMS and ICS," noted Hainsey. "However, what many airports need and what the report provides are suggestions on how to more fully integrate NIMS and ICS into the airport environment for a more effective response to incidents and events."

Kim Castro's passion for *ACRP Report 103* manifests itself in how extensively she has utilized the findings and outcomes from the report. "We are a non-certificated general aviation airport," said Castro. "This report was an exceptional tool to gain additional information concerning the value and application of NIMS and one of its operational components, ICS."

One of the greatest challenges facing an airport without on-site aircraft rescue firefighting services (ARFF) is integrating mutual aid/law enforcement agencies response procedures to effectively manage incidents and events. Castro noted how *ACRP Report 103* led her and her KISM airport colleagues to redefine staff response



Above: KISM airport administrators and community stakeholders participating in an emergency response planning exercise. Preliminary meetings with responders like these lead up to full-scale disaster exercises conducted at airports. ACRP Report 103 describes how NIMS/ICS are the framework for developing the exercises. Image courtesy of KISM.

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roles based on internal subject matter expert (SME) resources and to reconfigure her airport's ICS model to reflect the scope of the response, impact, and associated management structure.

The report provides guidance that helps airport professionals to develop or improve their strategic relationships and emergency plans with surrounding jurisdictions, using the common platform, language, and system residing within NIMS/ICS. The work of Castro and her colleagues at Kissimmee shows evidence of this. KISM staff utilized the report in a recent community-based emergency preparedness workshop that Castro helped moderate. The workshop involved emergency preparedness professionals from a variety of organizations—police, fire, and airport—and other emergency operations providers within the Kissimmee area.

As noted in *ACRP Report 103*, if an incident triggers a response from off-airport agencies it underscores the importance of understanding and using NIMS/ICS, especially when considering communications across multiple domains. “We convened the workshop to redefine how the airport integrates ICS,” said Castro, “creating an Airport Emergency Response Team that understands the SME limitations on airport staff.”

Castro identified several additional ways she and her colleagues have applied the findings of *ACRP Report 103*:

- Updated the KISM Airport Emergency Plan (AEP). Incorporated Tables 12 to 17 from the report to ensure AEP duties of general/command staff are fully exemplified in incident responsibilities.
- Adapted the word “Airport” to Operations department call signs during emergencies, to prevent miscommunication with Operations section staff.
- Identified Airport Management’s flexibility to assign staff based on SME and the specific nature of the incident.
- Identified use of an Airport Emergency Operations Center (EOC) versus activation of the county or city EOC.
- Utilized specific language from the report to clarify the director’s responsibilities, outside of the tactical scene, when providing support not resident to the Command Post (CP).
- Within the Incident Command function the Kissimmee Airport was able to use specific language from the report to clarify the director’s responsibilities
- Utilized Figures 8 and 11 from the report to redesign airport incident command situation models for small and complex incidents.

ACRP Report 103—one of the most downloaded reports from the TRB website—provides guidance to all airports for integrating principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) into airport response plans for incidents, accidents, and events.

“This report was an exceptional tool to gain additional information concerning the value and application of NIMS and one of its operational components, ICS.”

—Kimberly Castro, Operations Coordinator
Kissimmee Gateway Airport
Kissimmee, Florida



Above: Airports without on-site aircraft rescue firefighting services are challenged to integrate mutual aid response procedures to effectively manage incidents. *ACRP Report 103* provides guidance on NIMS/ICS which helps airports develop or improve strategic relationships and emergency plans with surrounding jurisdictions. Image source: Andrew Malone (flickr.com/photos/andrewmalone), licensed under CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0).

- Incorporated flexibility to the Airport Director to absorb certain roles within command and general staff as needed.

“Obviously we don’t ever want a critical incident or emergency at our airport but we have to expect it,” observed Hainsey. “I’ve seen far too many airports which are not adequately prepared for unforeseen emergencies, particularly small and medium sized airports. The principles and guidance offered in *ACRP Report 103* can help airports of all sizes better manage an effective and safe response in the event of a major incident or event at the airport.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPONSORSHIP: This work was sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration and was conducted in the Airport Cooperative Research Program, which is administered by the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies.

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