

Integrating Airport Research and Decision-making: A Case Study

Tony Cugno is unequivocal when describing the role airport research plays in his organization's decision-making processes. "The use of ACRP reports is part and parcel of our organizational culture. We employ a business-plan like assessment for all major decisions and we rely on the findings of ACRP reports to help guide that business planning."

Powerful words from Cugno, chief operating officer for the Jacksonville Aviation Authority (JAA), and concrete evidence of how ACRP is positively impacting airports. "In my mind, ACRP represents the 'best and the brightest' minds in our industry," says Cugno. "As such, presenting our business case

to the JAA Board with ACRP-based evidence provides the Board a level of assurance that our proposed solution is the right way to proceed."

JAA serves the commercial, business, and recreational aviation needs of northeast Florida and southeast Georgia. From passengers traveling through Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) and recreational pilots taking off and landing at Herlong Recreational Airport, to U.S. Coast Guard flight training at Cecil Airport and student pilot operations at Jacksonville Executive, JAA remains laser-focused on its number one strategic priority—safety and security.

"Our pledge is to deliver the best airport system in the world. ACRP reports help us fulfill that pledge."

—Tony Cugno
Chief Operating Officer
Jacksonville Aviation Authority

This focus is made possible, in large measure, because the findings from a wide range of ACRP reports are utilized in all areas of JAA. As Cugno states, ACRP is "part and parcel" of the JAA culture. This is evidenced when you spend a few minutes talking to some JAA employees about ACRP.

Meaghan Smalley is the manager of Airport Communications and Emergency Preparedness for JAA. She relies heavily on the "case examples" contained in *ACRP Synthesis 60: Airport Emergency Post-Event Recovery Practices*. "I use the aircraft accident, natural disasters, and criminal acts case examples during our emergency preparedness and training team meetings," says Smalley. "These case examples provide an in-depth look into the emergency, common incident objectives, and lessons learned from other airports."

Smalley utilizes Appendices C and D from *ACRP Synthesis 45: Model Mutual Aid Agreements for Airports* to format mutual aid agreements between JAA and the City of Jacksonville. "The templates in those appendices are



Above: Jacksonville Aviation Authority (JAA) Communications and Emergency Preparedness manager Meaghan Smalley (left) interacting with City of Jacksonville representatives during the 2014 Airport Disaster Exercise. This FAA-required exercise also gives the JAA an opportunity to exercise mutual aid agreements. JAA staff refer to ACRP Report 45 for guidance in forming mutual aid agreements to manage crises such as an aircraft disaster. Photo courtesy of JAA.

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actually from other airports, so the verbiage is easy to adjust based on the airport being discussed,” she notes.

Smalley also references in her work *ACRP Synthesis 50: Effective Cooperation Among Airports and Local and Regional Emergency Management Agencies for Disaster Preparedness and Response*. The report provides a checklist of items to consider when creating and maintaining effective relationships amongst emergency management partners. “At JAX, I have taken this checklist and modified it based on our airport’s needs,” says Smalley. “I have presented my findings at our Emergency Preparedness meetings and at city leadership meetings.”

Active engagement in the ACRP arena affords numerous opportunities for continuous learning as evidenced by Smalley’s recent role as a moderator for ACRP webinar on *ACRP Report 112: Airport Terminal Incident Response Planning*. “I just learned about the TIRP Tool during the ACRP webinar that I moderated. I have already downloaded the tool off of the ACRP website, and have started plugging our airport information into it,” Smalley notes.

“This tool, once complete, will serve as an additional report that I can use for training staff and housing important names and contact information that I will need during a terminal emergency.”

Roger Studenski is the Risk Management administrator for JAA. In this role, he helps ensure focus on JAA’s top strategic priority—safety. He and his team rely heavily on ACRP to do their jobs. In fact, Studenski has utilized findings from more than 35 different ACRP reports during the past 5 years.

“*ACRP Report 74: Application of Risk Management at Airports* provided excellent guidance for our Enterprise Risk Management efforts,” notes Studenski. “I utilized the Volume 2 Guidebook from *ACRP Report 1: Safety Management Systems for Airports* to help formulate our system safety plan. And, I utilized the findings from *ACRP Legal Research Digest 19* to help manage the legal risks associated with our SMS and ERM policies, procedures and practices.”

Studenski continues, “I rely on the findings in ACRP reports for insight as

I develop policies and procedures for JAA. I also look to ACRP reports for solid information and ideas regarding how to do’s.” Studenski also teaches safety-related courses at Embry Riddle University. In this role he relies heavily on *ACRP Report 131: A Guidebook for Safety Risk Management at Airports*.

Paul Gerrety is the properties manager in Business Development at JAA. He is also an ACRP Champion, part of a recently launched ACRP program to help early- to mid-career professionals grow and excel within the airport industry. Gerrety has relied on ACRP research for years, beginning with *ACRP Report 19: Developing an Airport Performance-Management System* which he utilized for his graduate research work at Embry Riddle University.

Gerrety’s reliance on ACRP continues today. He is actively engaged in airport-airline lease and operating agreements with air carriers at JAX, and *ACRP Report 36: Airport/Airline Agreements—Practices and Characteristics* is providing him the guidance and confidence he needs to make sound decisions. “ACRP is a tremendous self-education resource,” Gerrety says, “and helps me identify viable solutions to the unique challenges encountered at all four airports here within the JAA system.”

From operations and finance to administration and maintenance, ACRP research is having an enormous impact throughout JAA. “When it comes to the efficacy of ACRP reports, the size of the department and the size of the airport do not matter,” says Cugno. “ACRP findings have significant impact and add tremendous value by helping us make our airports more valuable to our communities. More importantly, ACRP reports help our employees grow—making them more valuable assets to us and to our industry.”



Above: The Jacksonville Aviation Authority (JAA) Operations team discusses findings from ACRP Report 112 at an April 2016 meeting. JAA has benefited greatly from the TIRP Tool available in this report. The TIRP Tool is a one-stop shop for all pertinent information the Operations staff would need during an emergency. Photo courtesy of JAA.

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