

ACRP Problem Statement: 15-06-01

Best Practices for Airports in Family Assistance After an Aviation Accident

Recommended Funding Amount: \$300,000

ACRP Staff Comments

No staff comments.

TRB Aviation Group Committee Comments

AVIATION SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: Although airlines already have a requirement for a written plan in this area through 49USC 41113 and 41313, there is no airport equivalent mandate. Airports would benefit from the proposed guidebook of best practices. The problem statement could also be expanded to be multi-modal in scope, i.e., beyond just aviation. Also, there's too much focus on background information, so the first two tasks should be dropped or minimized.

Review Panel Comments

Recommended. Emergency response plans are supposed to include a family assistance component; however, not all airports have met this requirement, particularly those not included in Part 139. There are standard practices--incident command, medical, NTSB, a friends-and-family component, how the municipality fits in, and a communications component. It would be helpful to create standardized categories of actions for participants. ICAO document 9973, relating to provision of assistance to aircraft accident victims and families, provides general leadership and guidance, but does not offer descriptive case studies. There is good leadership around those that have experienced events which describe those events, responses, and lessons learned on major events; however, not all airports have the ability to attend briefings. Airline clusters (regionals, charter) also need to be trained. Airports of all sizes should be included, and mutual aid should also be included. Exercises should also include family issues and assistance. How to set up a full scale exercise and run drills should be included. JetBlue has a system-wide, full-scale exercise in June.

Problem Statement
March 14, 2014

Title: Best Practices for Airports in Family Assistance after an Aviation Accident

Background: Airports dedicate substantial resources preparing and training for potential aviation incidents and accidents at or near their facilities. While the immediate focus of every airport after an incident or accident is on the preservation of life and the protection of property, these events have complex ramifications for the airport in terms of the meeting the needs of both survivors and the families of victims, coordinating dissemination of information about the incident, and basic facility management.

In an accident resulting in a loss of life, domestic and foreign airlines are federally mandated, under the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 (49 USC § 41113; 49 USC § 41313), to immediately implement specific requirements as part of a formally-developed, comprehensive Family Assistance Plan. However, implementation of these plans, which can involve dispatching specially trained “go teams” and the mobilization of external resources, can take hours to achieve. As a result, airport operators almost always serve as the immediate “first responders” that need to deal with not only with emergency response, but also family assistance, survivor assistance, media relations and crowd control.

Research is needed to help airports develop best practices and establish procedures and training around non-emergency response to an aviation accident, including complementing the federally mandated airline response. Providing these practices and procedures will help airports respond in a more comprehensive way to an aviation accident, ultimately benefiting the victims, family members and others impacted by the accident.

Objective: Create best practices in airport family assistance response, including training and implementation guides. It will:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders during an aviation accident in reference to the needs of survivors, friends, and relatives.
- Create case studies of previous accidents to demonstrate effective practices and present lessons learned.
- Develop standard duties for establishing airport centers for friends and relatives, survivor centers, and reunification locations for passengers and relatives.
- Create guidelines for airport emergency operations centers to support the needs of accident victims and their families.
- Devise protocols for tracking of injured passengers within both the airport triage system and the local community emergency management/emergency medical/hospital systems. Review potential areas of concern for airports.
- Provide recommendations for establishing and implementing an effective response plan.
- Provide training and exercise suggestions.

Proposed Tasks:

1. Review available literature and research regarding airport family assistance programs.
2. Select and evaluate several case studies for benchmarking
3. Review common challenges facing airport operators related to the non-emergency response to an aviation accident.
4. Identify key elements for creating a comprehensive airport family assistance plan that allows airlines to meet their federal mandates and ensures coordination with local, state and federal agencies.
5. Prepare a guidebook with recommended strategies for implementing a family assistance plan and associated training for airport stakeholders.

Estimated Funding:

\$300,000

Est. Research Duration:

18 months

Related Research:

ACRP Synthesis Report 50: Effective Cooperation among Airports and Local and Regional Emergency Management Agencies for Disaster Preparedness and Response

ACRP Report 22: Helping Airport and Air Carrier Employees Cope with Traumatic Events

ACRP Report 103: A Guidebook for Integrating NIMS for Personnel and Resources at Airports

NTSB Federal Family Assistance Plan for Aviation Disasters

Airport Emergency Plan, FAA Advisory Circular 150 / 5200-31C

ICAO Policy Document on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families (Doc 9998, 2013)

ICAO Manual on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families (Doc 9973, 2013)

Problem Development:

ACI-NA has met with airports and the National Transportation Safety Board regarding awareness of family assistance plans and how airports can be prepared to respond. The proposed ACRP project is one element of an ongoing series of webinars, conference presentations and training events conducted by airports, airlines, local response agencies and federal response agencies (including the NTSB) regarding family assistance plans.

Submitters:

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