Aircraft Down - Are You Ready?

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United States airports are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) under the Code of Federal Regulations Title 14, Part 139 Certification of Airports. This regulation details on how airports are classified, the amount of agent and type of apparatus required, minimum training for personnel, and the components within an Airport Emergency Plan.

The units required at each airport must be available during air carrier operations; however, some airports do not operate 24 hours a day but these Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) units are available. Airports that have a 24 hour operation usually exceed the ARFF unit minimum requirements to cover for times of preventative maintenance or other mechanical deficiencies. Many communities surrounding airports with ARFF apparatus do not understand they have these specialty resources available for mitigating flammable liquid fires.

Numerous airports also have training facilities to maintain ARFF personnel certifications, or they bring special training prop to the airport for meeting the FAA recurrent training requirements. This is an excellent opportunity for joint collaborative training programs to be effectively implemented and provides communities surrounding the airport an opportunity to gain exposure to aircraft incident responses. While also allowing the airport ARFF crews a great way to network with the departments they may be calling upon for mutual aid assistance for on airport crashes.

ARFF units can meet the needs and demands of fire departments on and off airports as they are a valuable foam asset for fuel tanker vehicle fires or major spills on local roadways. These specialty vehicles are extremely effective for aircraft incidents that occur off the airport because of the amount of jet fuel that is carried on civilian aircraft, as well as the significant hazards associated with military aircraft. Military installations have specialized expertise for armament and ejection systems, while also having the same type of apparatus capabilities as airports.

NFPA 402 addresses the Criteria cover pre-incident emergency planning, emergency response, post-aircraft accident procedures, and structural fire department operations at aircraft rescue and firefighting incidents. Airport Emergency Plans are required to include all of the mutual aid partners that may be necessary for mitigating a major aircraft emergency. NFPA 424 indicates the importance of airports to work closely with community partners to ensure everyone is ready to assist. According to the National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) approximately 45% of aircraft incidents occur on property, which means over half of the aircraft crashes occur in the local communities. This emphasizes the importance of joint training, as well as the need to understand the resources available both on and off the airport. The FAA requires a full-scale exercise to test the AEP every three years and should include all agencies identified in the plan. Not only is NFPA 424 a valuable asset when developing and implementing an emergency plan, but also describes the operational procedures for both airport and structural fire departments charged with providing and maintaining ARFF services at airports.
Thank You

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