



EMERGENCY RESPONSE - FLORIDA AIRPORTS STEP UP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In addition to serving in traditional roles that are obvious to the general public, airports also support many critical services that are not often recognized by local communities. Highways and road networks are often thought of as the backbone of the national transportation network but airports offer an opportunity to access areas that ground-based networks cannot. From air ambulances, medical transport, and emergency medical service (EMS) aircraft to law enforcement, aerial firefighting, disaster response and relief, and search and rescue efforts, airports are often positioned as a key factor in disaster and emergency response. Florida's airports have had the unfortunate chance to prove this time and time again and will continue to do so in the future any time a local, statewide, national, or even international crisis hits. When quick access is needed during times of emergency, Florida's airports are on the front line.



Natural Disasters - Providing Quick Relief

Florida's airport system has been critical in responding before and after natural disasters strike, most recently with Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016. When Hurricane Irma hit, the U.S. Air Force mobilized C-17 cargo transport aircraft from Joint Base Charleston in South Carolina and Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to bring more than 300 doctors, nurses, and medical staff to Orlando International Airport to respond to statewide needs. Airports also often serve as staging grounds for land-based response efforts. Prior to hurricanes, utility companies often stage line and bucket trucks at airports for quick post-storm deployment. Marion County Airport in Dunnellon, FL, had 1,200 line trucks and 600 other vehicles staged on the airport after Irma to aid in regional response. Martin County's Witham Field served a similar role after Hurricane Matthew.



Foreign Aid - Helping Beyond Borders

Following the devastating earthquake that rocked Haiti in early 2010, Florida's airports provided lifesaving support services, including transporting personnel and supplies to and victims from the island nation. Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport served as a critical base to transport supplies and personnel between the U.S. and Haiti following the devastating earthquake. General aviation aircraft were able to land at small airports and in very rural areas inaccessible to many large aircraft with the flexibility to provide immediate aid to the areas where it was most needed.



EMS & Law Enforcement - Keeping Florida Safe

Many of Florida's airports also serve as the home for local EMS and law enforcement aircraft operations. Airports throughout the state support local and regional emergency response activities by police and sheriff helicopters and EMS aircraft. A perfect example is Trauma Hawk in Palm Beach County. Established more than 20 years ago, the Health Care District of Palm Beach County operates two Sikorsky S76-C+ air ambulances, capable of speeds near 180 miles per hour. These two helicopters are used to respond to emergencies across the county's 2,300 square miles – more than any other county in Florida – and bring patients to the county's two trauma centers. The Brevard County Sheriff's Office's Aviation Unit – the Sheriff's Tactical Air Response (STAR) – uses Merrit Island Airport as home for their four OH-58A+ helicopters, one of which is outfitted with fixed-floats to allow for on-water responses throughout the county. In addition to responding to "traditional" calls such as search and rescue, counter drug surveillance, and crimes in progress, STAR also provides increased security overwatch for ships entering and exiting Port Canaveral, assists in enforcing Temporary Flight Restrictions during launch operations from Cape Canaveral Spaceport, and assists during Presidential visits.

BY THE NUMBERS

Marion County Airport

- 1,200 line trucks and 600 other vehicle staged on the airport after Hurricane Irma

Orlando International Airport

- 300 doctors, nurses, and medical staff arrived at the airport from Joint Base Charleston in South Carolina and Dover Air Force Base in Delaware in response to Hurricane Irma

Palm Beach County Airports

- Home to the Trauma Hawks, two Sikorsky S76-C+ air ambulance helicopters used to respond to emergencies across the county's 2,300 square miles- more than any other county in Florida

Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport

- Served as a critical base for transporting supplies and personnel between the U.S. and Haiti following the devastating earthquake on the island in 2010



Overview

Airports across the state serve as crucial bases for a variety of disaster, emergency, and public safety operations. Without Florida's extensive airport system, the brave first responders throughout the state would not have the same ability to protect our residents and visitors on a daily basis. When natural disasters strike – whether a hurricane here in Florida or an earthquake in another country – Florida's airports are poised to serve as the launching point for response and recovery efforts. Florida's airports truly are an essential part of statewide, national, and international emergency response and support.