

*Press Office*  
City of Chicago, Department of Aviation  
Richard L. Rodriguez, Commissioner



# News Release

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## **O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT HOLDS FULL-SCALE EMERGENCY RESPONSE DISASTER DRILL**

CHICAGO – The City of Chicago Department of Aviation will conduct a full-scale emergency response disaster drill today at O'Hare International Airport. The drill was originally scheduled on September 13, 2008, but was canceled due to severe storms and flooding in the Chicago area. Today's exercise will begin between 10 and 10:30 a.m. and will take place at the Regional Fire Training Facility located on the north airfield.

The airport is required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to hold a full-scale airport emergency plan exercise at least once every three years. City departments, state agencies, and ambulance and fire companies from surrounding suburbs will participate in the drill to test emergency response procedures in the event of a major airfield incident.

"The safety and security of our travelers is always our highest priority," said Aviation Commissioner Richard L. Rodriguez. "Planning and practicing for a major airfield incident is critical to ensuring the success of any emergency response."

O'Hare's state-of-the-art fire training and rescue facility is the nation's best. Firefighters from around the country and suburban fire companies come to O'Hare International Airport to gain first-hand experience in rescue activities.

"Our firefighters and paramedics are constantly training; this multi-agency disaster drill enhances our preparedness for an actual disaster situation," said Fire Commissioner John W. Brooks. "A drill such as this gives us an opportunity to test our ongoing training in a more realistic setting, which allows us to better evaluate our readiness and abilities."

As coordinators of disaster preparedness training for hospitals, the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council is once again assisting the city. Volunteers from the Great Lakes Naval Base will serve as victims in the scenario, with injuries simulated through "moulaging," a technique that uses theatrical makeup.

This requirement to test airport/airfield emergency response is mandated by the FAA, and is a condition precedent to U.S. airports' operating certification by FAA standards.

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A full-scale crisis plan exercise is required by the FAA under Part 139 of the Federal Aviation Regulations in order to maximize safety at the airport in the event of an emergency.

"The Office of Emergency Management and Communications is doing its part to remain alert for any and all emergency situations that may come our way," said Executive Director Ray Orozco. "And the O'Hare Airfield Emergency Response Disaster Drill gives us an opportunity to practice how various departments would respond during a major accident."

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), a federal agency that investigates aircraft accidents involving serious injury or substantial property damage, will participate in the disaster drill.

"A successful emergency response to any transportation accident is achieved not only through planning, training, and resources, but through exercising those elements to assure that all of the facets of the emergency plan come together to provide the most effective response possible in an actual emergency," said NTSB Senior Air Safety Investigator Pam Sullivan.

Airport terminals will make announcements to passengers indicating that the disaster drill is taking place. The drill will have no impact on routine airport operations.

The last exercise held at O'Hare was in May 2006.

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The Chicago Airport System is self-supporting, using no local or state tax dollars for operations or capital improvements at O'Hare and Midway International airports. Together, Chicago's airports generate more than \$45 billion in annual economic activity and 540,000 jobs for the region. Please visit [www.flychicago.com](http://www.flychicago.com) to learn more about the Chicago Airport System.

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