



**April 16, 2015**

## **Hartsfield-Jackson Successfully Tests its Emergency Response with Full-scale Disaster Drill**

***‘Big Bird’ simulation involved flaming plane, hundreds of ‘victims’ and emergency personnel***

**ATLANTA** – Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport’s emergency responders tested their emergency preparedness last night in a triennial drill known as Big Bird. The event took place at the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department’s training facility on Lake Mirror Road near the Airport.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires airports to conduct full-scale emergency-preparedness drills at least once every three years, in addition to smaller, annual drills.

“The safety and security of our customers is the Airport’s top priority and we conduct drills every year to ensure our emergency preparedness,” said Miguel Southwell, Aviation General Manager. “Big Bird is a large-scale drill that allows the Airport’s emergency responders, staff and other agencies an opportunity to practice and evaluate their responses to an emergency situation.”

Organizers devised a highly complex scenario involving an aircraft fire, simulated injuries and crowd control – and taking place for the first time after dark. More than 70 volunteers portrayed survivors and victims, while firefighters, law enforcement and rescue personnel worked the scene. Airport officials practiced scenarios in which they communicated with other agencies, surrounding jurisdictions and the media.

“This drill provides a snapshot of the Airport’s resources and abilities in responding to a major incident,” said Atlanta Fire and Rescue Department Battalion Chief Michael Winfrey. “We’re judged by FAA inspectors on our response times, triage capabilities and our ability to coordinate with outside mutual aid services. I am greatly satisfied with our performance at last night’s exercise.”

In addition to 51 airport first responders who took part in the exercise, the drill saw participation by other 30 emergency personnel from other agencies, including the City of Atlanta, Grady Hospital, Clayton County and the cities of College Park and Riverdale.

Kevin M. Burke, president and CEO of Airports Council International North America, the trade organization representing commercial airports in the United States and Canada, said drills like Big Bird are important to ensuring the safety and security of the travelling public.

“An effective emergency response plan that includes affected stakeholders is a key part of an airport’s responsible preparation,” Burke said. “Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, like other airports,

routinely undertakes essential full-scale emergency preparedness drills to help airport personnel and stakeholders at the airport better understand their safety and emergency responsibilities.”

For video footage, go to [vimeo.com/channels/atlnews](https://vimeo.com/channels/atlnews).

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### **Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport**

Hartsfield-Jackson (ATL) is the world’s busiest and most efficient airport, serving more than 96.1 million passengers annually with nonstop service to more than 150 U.S. destinations and nearly 70 international destinations in more than 45 countries. ATL boasts a direct economic impact of \$34.8 billion in metro Atlanta and a total direct economic impact of \$70.9 billion in Georgia. The Airport is the largest employer in Georgia, with more than 63,000 employees. The Airport is a frequent recipient of awards of excellence for concessions, operations, architectural engineering and construction – including the 2013 Global Efficiency Excellence Award from the Air Transport Research Society, 2013 Project of the Year, Architectural Category for the Maynard H. Jackson Jr. International Terminal from the American Association of Airport Executives Southeast chapter and the 2012 Best Airport in North America, Business Travel Award from the Business Traveler Magazine. ATL has completed more than \$6 billion worth of capital improvements, including a new, energy-efficient rental car center, a gold LEED-certified international terminal and aesthetic and functional upgrades to its concourses, people movers and parking services. For more information, go to [www.atlanta-airport.com](http://www.atlanta-airport.com). Check out the Airport’s YouTube channel by visiting [www.youtube.com/AtlantaHartsfield](https://www.youtube.com/AtlantaHartsfield), follow us on Twitter (@Atlanta\_Airport) and become a fan on Facebook (Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport).

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