

**DESTIN-FORT WALTON BEACH AIRPORT TESTS EMERGENCY RESPONSE SKILLS.**

**Eglin Air Force Base** – 15 different agencies, including Okaloosa Airports, Eglin AFB Fire Emergency Services, The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office-Airport Security Unit, American Airlines, various military and civil branches at Eglin Air Force Base, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Twin Cities Hospital and Destin ER practiced for a worst case scenario: A civilian commuter plane crash on the tarmac at Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport.

The scenario kicked right after 9 AM when emergency responders received notice from the EAFB Air Traffic Control Tower telling them a plane crashed while attempting to take off with 105 passengers and 5 crew on board.

Various agencies answered the call, working alongside first responders from Eglin Air Force Base to put out the fire, save the survivors and connect them with loved ones.

From there, actors were shuttled to the three participating hospitals to ensure the realism of the drill.

The drill was comprehensive, testing the Airports Emergency Plan and helped identify areas that could be done better or changes that can increase efficiencies, coordination and response.

"If a disaster hits and affects the residents of Okaloosa County, we're ready for the event and can take care of any situation that may arise," said Emergency Management Coordinator for Okaloosa County, Ken Wolfe.

The drill spanned four hours and involved an estimated 200 personnel overall.

"In the unlikely event that a plane were to go down or we were to have an emergency event, this helps us work together as a collegial team as different responding agencies," Said Commissioner and Aviation Board Member Carolyn Ketchel.

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office went through the triennial drill for the first time and worked to coordinate the emergency response in the terminal with Emergency Management, keeping everyone safe and working to connect survivors with their loved ones, among other tasks.

"I want to especially commend the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office for the work that they have put into this drill today, they have provided invaluable assistance in coordinating all medical and emergency efforts," Commissioner Ketchel said.

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These drills are a Federal Aviation Administration requirement with table-top exercises held annually and a "Full Scale" (like today) held every three years. It is important that the public know, the Airport practices for perfection and resources are in place and a detailed plan is followed in the event of an emergency..

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