



For Immediate Release

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Ford Airport Completes Successful Full-Scale Exercise, Fire Training Amid Global Pandemic

Safety Precautions in Place as 12 Area Agencies Support, Train with Airport Team

Grand Rapids, Michigan, August 21, 2020 – Gerald R. Ford International Airport recently completed two days of training exercises, including a full-scale simulation of a plane crash, that brought together firefighters and first responders from 12 area agencies.

Additional precautions were established in order to protect the health and safety of those participating in two days of training: fire and rescue training on Thursday, Aug. 13, followed by a full-scale disaster drill on Friday, Aug. 14. Minnesota-based ARFF Specialists led both training exercises, using a custom-built simulator to enable firefighters to put their skills into practice in a realistic environment.

Mandated every three years by the Federal Aviation Administration, Friday's 90-minute drill was the culmination of months of planning and coordination. Teams from Ford Airport's fire, police, operations, communications and maintenance departments were joined by first responders from Michigan State Police, FAA Air Traffic Control, Caledonia Charter Township, Cascade Charter Township, Gaines Charter Township, Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Kent County, AMR West Michigan, Rockford Ambulance, Life EMS and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services. Together, they responded to a radio call of a simulated commercial aircraft down with an unknown number of passengers on board.

First responders worked to extinguish fires before boarding the aircraft and rescuing simulated passengers, including a number of children and infants. The injured were triaged and treated on the tarmac east of the Airport before being loaded into ambulances.

Limitations on the number of participants because of COVID-19 required the use of mannequins and inflatable dummies as passengers. While media are typically invited to attend and report on the drill, safety concerns prevented that from happening this year.

Media can access footage of the drill, interviews and still photos [here](#). Interviewees include:

- Ford Airport President and CEO Tory Richardson
- Public Safety and Operations Director Lisa Carr
- Interim Airport Rescue and Firefighting Chief Tony Gutierrez
- Cascade Township Fire Chief Adam Magers

- Kentwood Fire Chief Brent Looman
- ARFF Specialists Owner Wade Boyat

About the Ford Airport

The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is the second busiest airport in Michigan, serving business and leisure travelers with nonstop and connecting flights on six airlines. The Ford Airport is managed and operated by the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority. For more information, visit www.flyford.org or follow the airport on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @FlyGRFord.

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