

STATEMENT OF JAMES A. WILDING, DIRECTOR OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIRPORTS, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCY AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, CONCERNING EMERGENCY READINESS. MARCH 17, 1983.

Mr. Chairman and Member of the Subcommittee:

I am James A. Wilding, Director of the Metropolitan Washington Airports. As you know, both Dulles International and Washington National Airports are owned and operated by the Federal Government. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is the controlling Government agency. Within the FAA, the Metropolitan Washington Airports is the organizational element which is directly responsible for the operation of both airports.

Emergency planning and response at Dulles and National Airports is performed by the Metropolitan Washington Airports organization including Police and Crash-Fire-Rescue services at each airport. We maintain a substantial capability for handling emergencies which might arise at the airports. Assistance is available, if needed, through mutual aid arrangements with local jurisdictions and other Federal agencies in the area.

Before proceeding with specific responses to the Committee's written questions, I would like to emphasize FAA's continuing commitment to the maintenance and improvement of emergency response capabilities at Dulles and National Airports, through both in-house resources and cooperation with other local public safety organizations. While we learned a great deal from the Air Florida crash of January 13, 1982, the enhancements in the airports' emergency response capability since that time are not simply a reaction to the circumstances of the accident. Many such enhancements, including the acquisition of new river rescue boats and upgraded communications equipment, for example, were initiated before the Air Florida accident. Other revisions have resulted from our ongoing assessment of capabilities, including periodic disaster drills conducted in coordination with other local public safety agencies and area hospitals.

The Committee's letter of February 15, focuses on the present state of emergency preparedness at Dulles and National Airports. I will address the Committee's written questions in the order presented in its letter.

1. The Committee's first question concerns the compatibility of airport emergency plans with those of other local jurisdictions. We believe the emergency response procedures incorporated in the Dulles and National Airport Emergency Operating Manuals are entirely compatible with the emergency plans of local jurisdictions. An Emergency Operations Manual is maintained for each Airport, covering specific procedures for various emergencies ranging from natural disasters to aircraft hijackings. The manuals are updated periodically to incorporate new information on equipment, communication systems, and revised operating procedures. The Dulles and National Airport Emergency Operating

Manuals provide for notification of local jurisdictions affected by an emergency situation, and the manuals have been furnished to local jurisdictions to enhance coordination in the event of a mutual aid call.

As with other local jurisdictions, Metropolitan Washington Airports has primary responsibility for emergency response within its own political boundaries, in this case, the airport boundary. These boundaries are clear, and responsibility for emergencies at any given location in the region is also clear.

In accordance with existing mutual aid agreements, the airports may call on surrounding jurisdictions for assistance in airport emergencies or respond to requests for assistance by another jurisdiction. The continuing compatibility of the respective emergency management plans at Metropolitan Washington Airports with those of the other local jurisdictions is assured by the clear division of responsibility, by mutual aid agreements, and by continuing routine contacts between our public safety people and public safety personnel of other local jurisdictions.

2. The Committee's second question relates to the types of emergencies for which the airports are prepared, and the availability of resources to respond. Metropolitan Washington Airports is equipped to respond to any foreseeable type of emergency situation at the airports. Primary concerns are the ability to handle aircraft crashes and structural fires. Because the requirements for each are somewhat different, FAA maintains specialized equipment for aircraft accidents and conventional fire apparatus for structural fires. Aircraft crash

equipment includes fire trucks capable of dispensing foam and chemicals as well as water, and other specialized equipment for fuel fires. FAA also maintains four boats at National Airport in support of the primary river rescue mission of the D.C. Harbor Police. The largest FAA craft is a 40-foot steel-hull cutter with the capability to break through ice up to 4" thick. All FAA boats and many of the crash vehicles carry rafts and other flotation devices.

FAA public safety personnel are also trained for accidents involving hazardous substances, including toxic chemicals and biological and radiological materials.

Airport firefighters and police officers are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians to provide initial medical coverage in an airport emergency. At present, more than a third of airport police officers and nearly 90 per cent of airport firefighters are certified by the Commonwealth of Virginia or the National Registry as Emergency Medical Technicians. Both airports maintain certified EMT crews 24 hours a day, and have fully equipped life support ambulance units. Additional support in medical emergencies at both airports is provided by local hospitals and ambulance units. FAA has formal arrangements with National Orthopaedic and Loudoun County Memorial Hospitals and can also send patients to other local hospitals and trauma units. FAA includes many of these facilities in airport disaster drills.

3. The Committee's third question asks if the Airport Emergency Operations Manuals are consistent with recommendations made by the Council of Governments Metropolitan Emergency Response Task Force in a report dated May 19, 1982 and in

a subsequent report on action plans dated January, 1983. Again, I would note that while FAA has been responsive to COG recommendations for changes in the airport Emergency Operations Manuals, the Manuals have always been fundamentally compatible with those recommendations and major revisions have not been required.

The May 1982 report contained several specific recommendations relating to the Metropolitan Washington Airports. First, it was recommended that FAA extend the National Airport secondary response area north to Memorial Bridge, east to include the Potomac River, and south to the Wilson Bridge. The secondary response area is the off-airport area in which Metropolitan Washington Airports will respond automatically to an aircraft accident, without waiting for a mutual aid request. The boundaries of the National Airport secondary response area had been extended to the limits I have just described prior to publication of the COG report.

Second, COG recommended better coordination in disaster planning and response between the airports and the local jurisdictions, with four areas of emphasis: communications; training of airport personnel regarding their role in regional disaster exercises; integration of Trauma Center resources; and direct involvement in annual regional disaster drills.

With respect to communications, it was recommended that the Airports integrate their emergency communications with existing Metro area disaster response procedures. To the extent such integration was not already in effect, it has

been implemented. Both airports maintain FMARS (Fire Mutual Aid Radio System) and NOVA (Northern Virginia Mutual aid Frequency) frequencies. In addition, Dulles Airport has the Fairfax County and Loudoun County Fire Ground Emergency Channels, and National Airport has the Arlington County Fire Emergency Channel. Radio equipment using these frequencies is maintained on all structural apparatus and ambulances and on the larger crash trucks, on the Fire Chief's vehicle and Deputy Fire Chief's vehicle, and in the station communication centers. Airport ambulances are also on EMS Channel I. Our Communication Center at National Airport also maintains direct phone lines to the District of Columbia Harbor Police and Fireboat Operations, to the D.C. Police Helicopter Unit at National Airport, and to the Arlington County Emergency Operations Center. Additionally, our river rescue boats have the radio equipment and frequencies for direct communication with the D.C. Harbor Police and the Coast Guard. This communications capability, in conjunction with agreements on procedures for use of the various frequencies and channels, provides a comprehensive communications network between Metropolitan Washington Airports and other jurisdictions and agencies in the region.

With respect to integration of Trauma Center resources, and training and participation in regional disaster drills, it is our belief that FAA's efforts in each of these areas have been and continue to be maintained at an appropriate level. Utilization of hospital emergency unit resources has been accomplished through the participation of the medical directors in FAA's Emergency Medical Technician program. Integration of the resources of the Medstar Trauma Center

and other regional Trauma Centers can be accomplished through coordination with COG. FAA crash fire rescue personnel receive training on a periodic basis in regional exercises, and frequently receive off-airport training from such sources as other fire departments. Periodic disaster drills are conducted by FAA at the Airports for both land and water situations, with the participation of the local agencies and organizations which would become involved in an actual emergency of that nature. FAA is willing to participate in any other regional exercises reasonably related to each airport's situation and response capability.

With regard to the Emergency Response Action Plan proposed by COG in January, FAA supports the recommended actions in the plan and will cooperate in any tasks in which we have the ability to contribute. In view of the airports' present communication capabilities and existing mutual aid agreements, we believe the airports are already in substantial compliance with the ultimate goals of the plan.

4. Coordination of Dulles and National Airport public safety officials with their counterparts in neighboring jurisdictions is extensive and successful. This coordination takes several forms. First, Metropolitan Washington Airports is party to several mutual aid agreements with local jurisdictions. Agreements have long existed for fire rescue emergencies with Arlington County, Alexandria, Fairfax County and Loudoun County. A formal agreement has been proposed by FAA to the District of Columbia but has not yet been executed; however, FAA and

District public safety personnel routinely cooperate on operational matters by informal agreement.

Second, FAA Airport police and crash fire rescue personnel work with the Park Police, the public safety personnel of Northern Virginia local jurisdictions, and the D.C. Harbor Police on a daily basis. Cooperative efforts relate to structural fires, auto accidents, law enforcement incidents, boating emergencies, and other routine emergency response situations. Cooperation may be incident to the mutual aid agreements I have just mentioned or to more informal arrangements. This routine coordination is facilitated by the various networks of mutual frequencies and direct phone lines available between the airports and local public safety units.

Third, airport personnel cross-train with public safety personnel of local jurisdictions, so that each has direct knowledge of the equipment and geography which will be encountered in a mutual aid call to the other's jurisdiction. Also, the certification of airport police officers and firefighters as Emergency Medical Technicians by the Commonwealth of Virginia permits airport personnel to share common procedures and terminology with their counterparts in Northern Virginia jurisdictions.

Finally, airport public safety officials participate extensively in regional professional associations. For example, Metropolitan Washington Airports crash fire rescue officials participate in the regular meetings of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs, the Virginia Fire Chiefs, and the COG Fire Chiefs' Committee,

including subcommittees on training, communications, and disaster planning. Metropolitan Washington Airports is also a member of the Federal Fire Service Task Group, and our fire chief is presently chairman of that group.

In summary, we believe our emergency readiness planning is sound, current, and consistent with overall regional planning. We are well equipped and well trained. More importantly, our public safety people are very proud of their ability to respond quickly and well to emergency situations, we are quick to solicit assistance from our neighbors when we need it, and are also quick to give it when our help is needed by others.

That concludes my prepared presentation. I would be pleased to answer any questions the members of the Committee might have at this time.