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## Emergency teams train for disaster at Eastern Iowa Airport

by Katie Stinson :: UPDATED: 7 May 2011 | 8:35 pm :: in [Featured](#), [Local Events](#), [Local News](#), [Public Safety](#) :: [No Comments](#)

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CEDAR RAPIDS – It’s the worst moment any pilot, passenger or controller can experience.

A passenger flight fails to show landing gear when approaching the runway. Soon, flames and thick smoke consume the aircraft as emergency personal arrive to attack the flames and rescue those who can be saved.

Luckily, this is only a drill here in Eastern Iowa.

Saturday morning’s scenario at the Eastern Iowa Airport involved a purposely lit flaming bus, instead of an airliner. Though this was only practice, it was important for the airport as well as emergency responders. Drill or not, it felt incredibly real for those involved.

Deb Brenneman volunteered Saturday morning to play a victim. Burn marks were drawn across her face and a fake baby bump showed, casting her as the perfect pregnant crash victim.

“It was scary, it really was,” Brenneman said. “They just walk by you and you’re going help me! Help me!”

Today’s faux scenario stressed the importance of teamwork. The responders ranged from Linn County Sheriff’s deputies, to CRPD, to CR Fire and even local volunteer fire branches, all ready to practice how they would respond given an airport crisis.

Greg Buelow, of the Cedar Rapids Fire Department, said though the various responder’s roles varied, they all recognized the dire need to be on the same page and in constant communication.

“We got to make sure the fire department and other agencies get here, we work well together and we get people to the hospital and get them the treatment they need,” he said.

When push comes to shove though, it’s about saving lives, and without practice an incident like this becomes ominous pretty quickly. No one wants the real deal to be the test run.

Sara Mau, the Director of Operations for the Eastern Iowa Airport, couldn’t stress the importance of practicing these drills enough. Not only is it good to get out there and do it, she said, but it’s important to take lessons away from it too.

“The best thing about these drills is that we can learn from them, learn from any mistakes and improve upon them the next time,” Mau said. “As much as we play these drills we need to make sure we are ready for the real thing.”

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The Eastern Iowa Airport performs a drill at least once every three years, as it is required for them to stay licensed.



Area Ambulance responders Chris Sampson (left) and Brian Rechkemmer escort scenario volunteer victims Rece Dodge, 10, Deb Brenneman and her daughter Casandra, 5, to an area representing the hospital near the end of the disaster drill, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. The drill was set to test the response of various emergency departments in a worst case scenario. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



Robin Ulrich tries to dry the make-up used to make Volunteer Beth Stokes wounds, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. Stokes was among 175 people who volunteered to help during the emergency drill at the airport. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



German exchange student Thanh Nguyen, 17, volunteers as one of the victims during the disaster scenario, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. During the drill Nguyen was instructed to speak to emergency crews in German to test how efficiently they could act in an emergency situation when a language barrier is involved. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



Emergency crews help victims during the disaster drill, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



Fire crews put out a bus used to represent the airplane during the disaster scenario, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



Area Ambulance responder Brian Rechkemmer walks with volunteer Sara Stephens during the disaster drill, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)



Area Ambulance responders Chris Sampson (left) and Brian Rechkemmer escort scenario volunteer victims Rece Dodge, 10, Deb Brenneman and her daughter Casandra, 5, to an area representing the hospital near the end of the disaster drill, Saturday May 7, 2011 at the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids. The drill was set to test the response of various emergency departments in a worst case scenario. (Becky Malewitz/SourceMedia Group News)

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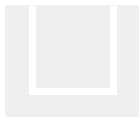
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