

ILLINOIS AIRPORTS ROLE IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Illinois airports play an important role in emergency response and disaster relief efforts throughout the state and across the United States. Illinois airports are critical components for search and rescue, firefighting, and natural disaster relief efforts. Examples of Illinois airports supporting these efforts are described below.

PROVIDING SUPPORT DURING NATURAL DISASTERS

Peoria International Airport (PIA) is a base for natural disaster relief efforts throughout the United States, as the Army National Guard Second Battalion, 238th General Support Aviation is based at the airport. The Second Battalion is an aviation unit that stands at the ready to rapidly support a range of natural disaster relief efforts, from wildfires to post-hurricane relief. In August 2020, the Second Battalion traveled to Mather, California to support wildfire relief efforts and provide essential aid during one of the California's largest wildfires in history. The Battalion's support consisted of rapidly transporting equipment and personnel to firefighting locations, as well as deploying water on the fire from above.

The Illinois National Guard also regularly supports hurricane and flood relief efforts. In 2018, ten Illinois National Guard personnel based out of PIA and Greater Kankakee Airport (IKK) deployed to North Carolina to support disaster relief efforts during and following Hurricane Florence.

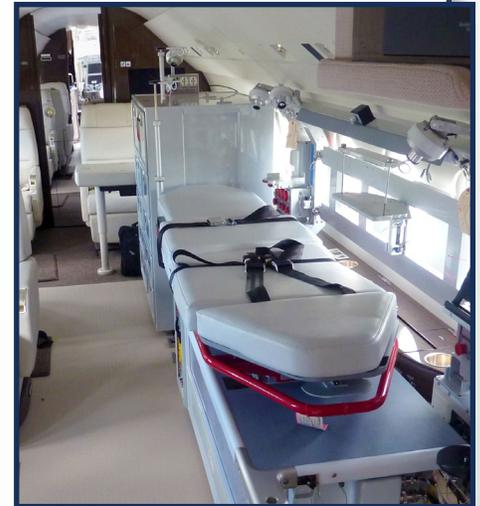
The Illinois Wing Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is based out of Scott Air Force Base and located in proximity to MidAmerica St. Louis Airport (BLV). Scott Air Force Base consists of over 1,000 cadets who deploy to areas across the country in support of disaster relief, search and rescue efforts, humanitarian services, and Air Force support. The CAP provided relief efforts during the 2017 flooding along the Mississippi, Illinois, and Big Muddy rivers; the 2009 southern Illinois and northern Kentucky ice storm; and the 2008 mass flooding of local rivers.



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PROVIDING EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE ACROSS ILLINOIS

Air ambulance operators are located at eight Illinois airports and collectively employ over 100 people. Air ambulance operators provide emergency transportation of medical patients across the state and Midwest region. An example of an air ambulance operator in Illinois is LifeLine Pilots, a non-profit organization that provides free air transportation in Illinois for financially distressed passengers with medical and humanitarian needs. LifeLine Pilots was founded in 1981 in Champaign, Illinois with a group of 40 pilots and the goal of assisting people with emergency medical conditions reach medical centers. Today, LifeLine Pilots is based near PIA in Peoria, Illinois. From Peoria, the organization's service area reaches beyond Illinois state borders into Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.¹ As of 2019, the organization has had over 450 volunteer pilots and has completed nearly 9,000 missions.



STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AIR OPERATIONS

Law enforcement aviation operations support ground law enforcement operations by providing advanced alerts and warnings to those on the ground.

At the state level, the Illinois State Police Air Operations Bureau (AOB), under the Special Operations Command (SOCOM), plays an essential role in responding to manhunts and missing persons calls, conducting air speed details, and providing aerial surveillance support across the state. AOB operations are based at airports throughout Illinois including the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport (SPI), Whiteside County Airport (SQI), and DuPage Airport (DPA).

¹ LifeLine Pilots: 2019 Annual Report



SUMMARY

Illinois airports play a crucial role in responding to all types of crises across the state, Midwest, and country. Illinois airports are home to local law enforcement, emergency medical, and National Guard emergency response operations. These airports serve as bases for personnel, aircraft, and supplies enabling the state's emergency responders to stand at the ready.