

**Airport and Emergency Response Coordination for Flight Test Operations:  
Recommended Practices and Notification Checklist  
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**Discussion and recommended practices.** On-airport accidents have highlighted the need for better coordination between flight test organizations and airport authorities, principally: Air Traffic Control (ATC), Airport Manager, and Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF). Face-to-face coordination is recommended well prior to conduct of test operations to share primary Points of Contact (POC), event(s) overview and preferred notification methods. Moreover, it is highly recommended that test article(s) training be provided to ARFF personnel, specifically noting aircraft normal and emergency entry/exit (including “cut here” markings), cockpit and cabin controls for engine/fuel control, as well as fire suppression system operation as appropriate. ARFF may be agreeable to maintaining a higher readiness level, such as manned trucks near the runway exclusion zone, to reduce response time for elevated risk test events.

Liaison with ATC will ensure proper awareness to unique mission requirements and potential runway delays. A cooperative relationship with ATC will also yield better overall traffic flow and testing efficiency. Test organizations may want to consider having a safety representative in the tower for airport traffic area intensive operations if ATC is amenable. At some ATC locations with terminal radar service, traffic deconfliction and area containment can be leveraged to reduce workload and enhance safety.

Coordination with Airport Manager will facilitate airport movement and non-movement area operations. Typically, on-airport testing support may require runway access, weather station placement, and test/marketing video capture. The Airport Manager will be familiar with authorized vehicle requirements, runway exclusion zones and other “off limits” areas to comply with airport policy and ensure ground support personnel safety.

Command and control for airport emergency response should be well understood as some airports have cooperative agreements with off-airport fire/rescue resources, or, aircraft crash crew separate from ground infrastructure fire/rescue responders. Test teams should inquire as to any unique emergency call switchboard functions to ensure a correct and rapid response. Joint civil/military airfields may also have a letter of agreement for ARFF, but assessing the firefighting and medical response capabilities for any airport arrangement is advised. Test teams should also ensure that incident or crash victims are transported to an appropriately capable, and company approved medical facility.

Finally, test teams should evaluate off-airport operating area or “range” rescue. Pre-coordination with airspace controlling agencies as well as Search and Rescue (SAR) assets (i.e. Coast Guard) should include primary phone numbers to initiate SAR and accident response plans. To that end, accident response plans should be developed and exercised prior to the commencement of test.

**Airport and Emergency Response Coordination and Notification Checklist.** The following is a comprehensive checklist that can be tailored to individual test team requirements. Coordination with all test sites should be part of the testing pre-requisites, and this checklist can aid in preparing for local or off-site testing operations.

**NLT one month prior to commencement of test:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact respective Airport Manager, ATC, and ARFF. Discuss planning options
- \_\_\_\_\_ Exchange POC, key phone numbers and email addresses
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule ARFF aircraft familiarization (and facility assessment as required)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide testing overview to Airport Manager, ATC and ARFF
- \_\_\_\_\_ Visit ATC and ARFF facilities to assess capabilities against expectations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact airspace controlling agencies and SAR
- \_\_\_\_\_ Incorporate key notification and response information into accident response plan (generate a test-specific version of the company response plan with site specific details)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conduct emergency response drill to assess notification (at a minimum)

**NLT one week prior to commencement of test:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Advise Airport Manager, ATC and ARFF of impending elevated risk testing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Advise airspace controlling agencies and SAR of impending elevated risk testing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ensure ARFF personnel have completed necessary aircraft familiarization
- \_\_\_\_\_ Debrief emergency response drill to flight test team and incorporate lessons learned
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide ARFF with latest test vehicle crash and rescue information

**Day prior to commencement of test:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Notify Airport Manager, ATC and ARFF of scheduled takeoff/operating time

**Day of elevated risk testing:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Brief Airport Manager, ATC and ARFF of testing status and any changes (alternatively, have them attend the flight brief)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide emergency contact sheet to airport manager
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tower safety representative to provide local controllers any pertinent testing details