



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Full-scale emergency operations exercise conducted in preparation of XWA opening**

**Williston, N.D. (September 17, 2019)** – On Saturday, September 14, 2019, a full-scale emergency operations exercise was conducted at the new Williston Basin International Airport (XWA), due to open on October 10, 2019. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires an airport to hold a full-scale exercise every three years.

The intention of the exercise, designed and coordinated by Williams County/Williston Emergency Management in collaboration with XWA, was to help test and evaluate XWA's emergency operations plan and the operational capabilities of the local emergency response system. Nine emergency response agencies, two medical response organizations, 50 volunteers, and several airport employees, local, and federal organizations participated in the exercise.

Volunteers, or "actors," played the part of "passengers" on two aircraft simulated by buses. The actors were prepped to play the part: they carried packed luggage and some wore realistic makeup applied by medical professionals to appear injured. Each "aircraft" was involved in its own unique emergency scenario. Emergency services, including fire, police, EMS, SWAT, medical flight evacuation, and the bomb squad, responded to the scenarios simultaneously. Responders were dispatched to the scene by the Upper Missouri River Regional Dispatch Center just as if a real emergency had occurred. Passengers were triaged and treated as if they were actually injured and transported to medical care that aligned with the severity of trauma.

Invited individuals were designated as "Observers" to watch the action and others were designated as "Evaluators" to provide feedback about the exercise, process, and response. Findings from the Evaluators will be shared with each participating agency and also used by Emergency Management, XWA, and local emergency services to develop an improvement plan. A debrief was held for emergency responders once the exercise concluded to also discuss what went right and what could be improved. Refreshments were provided by Meg-a-Latte, McDonald's, Wal-Mart, and Oasis Petroleum.

The importance of doing exercises such as this in a low-stress, no-fault environment according to Mike Smith, Williston/Williams County Emergency Management Director, is so that "responders are allowed an opportunity to get to know each other and how their agencies operate and work together in an emergency situation." The next exercise of this magnitude at XWA is expected to take place in 2022.

The following pages provide a list of all participating entities and a few photos from the exercise.

## **Williams County/Williston Emergency Management**

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Representatives from the following entities participated in the exercise:

**Emergency Response Agencies**

City of Williston Police Department  
City of Williston Fire Department and EMS  
Minot Police Department Bomb Squad  
Ray Community Ambulance  
Trenton First Responders  
Upper Missouri River Regional Dispatch Center  
Williams County SWAT Team  
Williams County Sheriff's Office  
Williams County/Williston Emergency Management

**Medical Response**

CHI St. Alexius Williston  
Valley Med Flight

**Airport operations**

Delta Global Services (DGS)  
XWA Airport Operations employees

**Observers**

Chrysalis Global  
City of Williston  
JE Dunn  
National Weather Service  
Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

**Evaluators**

CHI St. Alexius Williston  
Divide County Emergency Management  
ND Department of Emergency Services  
ND Southwestern District Health Unit  
ND Upper Missouri District Health Unit  
Towner County Emergency Management



EMS prepare to transport a “passenger” to the hospital.



The Williston Police Department and the Williams County SWAT team assist in evacuating “passengers” from the “aircraft.”



The Williston Fire Department and Valley Med Flight are two of the emergency services/medical response agencies involved in the exercise.