

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE May 12, 2023

TO Honorable Chair and Members of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

SUBJECT **After Action Report – Dallas Executive Airport Incident**

The Department of Aviation contracted the services of The Olson Group, Ltd (OGL) to conduct an After-Action Review of the November 12, 2022 Wings Over Dallas Airshow incident. OGL's process and approach afforded the Department of Aviation and its partners an opportunity to conduct a detailed, independent After-Action Review.

OGL noted that the leadership and personnel of the City of Dallas Department of Aviation/Dallas Executive Airport (RBD), Dallas Police Department (DPD), Dallas Fire Rescue (DFR)/Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF), the Commemorative Air Force (CAF), Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and other partner organizations worked cooperatively to plan for the event and in response to the tragic incident.

OGL's findings are outlined as followed:

## **Strengths**

- Existing relationships and the continuity of senior leadership contributed to a streamlined decision-making process.
- The efficient and effective response to the incident was led by experienced leaders who incorporated lessons learned from past events, utilized knowledge gained from pre-event planning and exercises, and adapted best practices from previous airshows.
- The Wings Over Dallas Airshow and the City of Dallas utilized the Incident Command System (ICS), which provided the much-needed structure to sort out operations in the face of a chaotic incident.
- At the start of each show day, Airport Operations, Dallas DFR/ARFF, OEM, and DPD personnel were provided with aircraft-specific familiarization training and detailed rescue instructions by the CAF.
- Several airport tenants offered their vacant hangars to RBD and the CAF to use the space to conduct meetings and briefings and to store aircraft debris, supplies, and other resources.
- The incident commander assigned staff to document the incident, providing a detailed timeline of events later analyzed by the review team to help identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Following the crash, CAF provided family assistance, including grief counseling, safe spaces for loved ones, meals, and other services. Once the victims' names were leaked

through social media, CAF transported family members and loved ones to an undisclosed hotel and away from the media.

- To expedite site clean-up and recovery of the aircraft and victim remains, the DPD utilized its Drone Unit to map elevation, and geo-coding to locate aircraft debris and human remains. This information was used by the NTSB in its independent crash investigation. This allowed for expedited recovery and permitted the reopening of Highway 67 within four hours of the initial incident.

## Improvements

- The RBD Airport Manager (Incident Commander) and airport leadership had not completed advanced ICS training before the incident
  - *Analysis:* While key RBD leadership have taken basic ICS training, they had not taken incident command training beyond ICS 100 and ICS 200. Feedback from incident command staff noted that the more advanced training would have assisted in:
    - Defining staging areas
    - Providing greater control on access to the command post
    - Clearing sufficient space for responder ingress and egress
    - Earlier demobilization of personnel and equipment
  - *Response:* RBD Airport Management completed training for both ICS 300 and 400 Series post-incident. A department policy has been implemented to include new and existing department management staff receive this training.
- There is insufficient RBD staff to support prolonged incident response and recovery operations over multiple operational periods
  - *Analysis:* While typical response agencies such as DFR/ARFF and DPD are regularly designed for 24/7 operations and working prolonged hours, RBD divisions are not staffed to support operations lasting multiple operational periods. Many RBD leadership, Operations, and Public Information personnel were on duty from 6:30 am – 11:00 pm on Saturday before returning to the airport early the following morning. The emotional impact of the incident varied from person to person, depending on their background and experience in responding to prior incidents.
  - *Response:* The Department of Aviation is implementing more advanced emergency planning, including emergency staffing, for RBD in coordination with OEM and the Aviation Emergency Manager.
- Unauthorized visitors were present in the airport emergency command center during the incident
  - *Analysis:* During the Airshow, several visitors were present in the command center when the incident occurred. Special arrangements had to be made for some of the visitors to be transported to another location in the airport. As the operational period continued, senior leadership and other non-essential staff gained access to the command center, which caused overcrowding and interference with emergency operations.
  - *Response:* Airport staff has implemented policy changes and training to prevent future occurrences in the command center.

- The hazardous materials, including fuel from the involved aircraft and foam used to extinguish the resulting fires, continues to be mitigated.
  - *Analysis:* As a result of the mid-air crash and subsequent firefighting activities, recognized chemicals of concern (COCs) pose a potential environmental and human health risk. These COCs related to fuel, additives, oil, etc., and applied fire-fighting foam fall under the purview of the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) Texas Risk Reduction Program (TRRP). TRRP establishes response action requirements for the remediation program areas of the TCEQ. Additionally, because of the unique site location, environmental assessment and remediation must be coordinated with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
  - *Response:* The Department of Aviation is working with the FAA and TCEQ to meet operational safety protocols, as well as environmental and human health guidelines during our assessment and remediation efforts. Partial site assessment is complete; however, additional assessment is required for full delineation prior to site remediation. Currently, Aviation is working towards completion of TCEQ assessment requirements prior to commencing remediation efforts.

The identified findings did not adversely affect the response to this particular incident, but provide a roadmap for the City of Dallas Department of Aviation and its partners to become more resilient and improve mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities for future emergencies. The Department of Aviation is working cooperatively with OEM, DPD, DFR, and other safety partners to establish improvements to the Airport System emergency response posture and ensure public safety at the Airports.

For any additional questions or concerns, please contact Patrick Carreno, Interim Director of the Department of Aviation at 214-670-6149 or [patrick.carreno@dallas.gov](mailto:patrick.carreno@dallas.gov).



Kimberly Bizer Tolbert  
Deputy City Manager

c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Tammy Palomino, Interim City Attorney  
Mark Swann, City Auditor  
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary  
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge  
Jon Fortune, Deputy City Manager

Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager  
M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Assistant City Manager  
Dr. Robert Perez, Assistant City Manager  
Carl Simpson, Assistant City Manager  
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer  
Genesis D. Gavino, Chief of Staff to the City Manager  
Directors and Assistant Directors