

GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

Local officials gathered near the Mount Vernon Outland Airport Monday to take part in a groundbreaking ceremony for the planned Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson.

Officials gather for new Air Evac base launch

Monday's ceremony draws a crowd of first responders and local officials

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MOUNT VERNON — It was a milestone day at the Mount Vernon Outland Airport Monday as local officials and first responders gathered for the official groundbreaking ceremony for the planned Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson.

The new base will house aircraft and crews from both Air Evac Lifeteam 11, currently located on Aviation Drive, and Air Evac Lifeteam 172, temporarily located at 100 Firebaugh Dr. The base will be built at 500 Firebaugh Dr., in the airport's Innovation Park. Recently, the Mount Vernon Airport Authority



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JOINT BASE JEFFERSON — Mount Vernon Airport Director Chris Collins, LEFT, makes a few remarks to the crowd during Monday's groundbreaking ceremony for the planned Air Evac Joint Base Jefferson. 11-22-23

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Board of Commissioners approved a \$1.9 million bid from Evrard Company of Marion for construction of the new base.

Air Evac's new home will place it near the center of the airport and adjacent to the primary runway. The new location will not only provide safer arrivals and departures during VFR (Visual Flight Rules) conditions, but will also meet all requirements for IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) approaches during poor weather conditions, Sentinel archives state.

"This is the first of its kind in the Midwest for us," said Joe Grygiel, vice president of operations for Global Medical Response, the parent company of Air Evac. "We've never had a joint base in the Midwest here and so it's the first of its kind."

Grygiel said the new base will add additional services to the communities.

"What we found was that, with the VFR aircraft, there was many times that we weren't getting to the patients that needed us," Grygiel said. "And the only way to do that was get an aircraft that had the ability to fly Instrument Flight Rules or IFR. And so the EC135 (helicopter) is what it's done. And then we needed a facility that could host it. We've been here at Mount Vernon

since March of 2000 and they've been great partners with us."

Grygiel thanked all of Air Evac's regional partners including Mount Vernon Airport, both local hospitals and ambulance services, Mount Vernon Fire Department, Jefferson Fire Protection District and others. The partners on the specific base project include Hanson; Brian P. Edmison, Architect; Bean Capital Bank Wayne City; and Evrard Company Incorporated.

Representatives of all of these agencies, as well as Mount Vernon and Jefferson County officials, attended Monday's groundbreaking. Those in attendance had lunch at the airport and then went to the site of the new base at 500 Firebaugh Dr., where project officials shoveled dirt and posed for photos for the groundbreaking.

"It's a major project for not just Mount Vernon but the entire southern third of the state," said Airport Director Chris Collins, adding that both Air Evac helicopters were flying while the groundbreaking ceremony was going on. "That just shows how busy our two bases are and how in need they are. ... Every time they lift, someone's life is in their hands."

A firm time frame has not been announced for completion of the new Air Evac base, but it is expected to be finished in 2024. For more information, contact Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

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