



Sentinel Photos/TRAVIS MORSE

PLANE CRASH TRAINING — The Mount Vernon Fire Department, Jefferson Fire Protection District, and Mount Vernon Outland Airport teamed up to hold a special aircraft emergency training exercise near the local airport. Firefighters practiced responding to a fictional plane crash scenario using part of a real airplane.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Local
firefighters
take part in
plane crash
training

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MOUNT VERNON — One of the key aspects of training for firefighters is to make the exercise as real as possible.

And that's just what local first responders were able to do last week, as Mount Vernon Fire Department, Jefferson Fire Protection District and Mount Vernon Outland Airport collaborated on a special three-night training exercise. The ultra-realistic session utilized part of a real plane, and tested how firefighters responded to a plane crash



FIRE RESPONSE — A Mount Vernon firefighter uses a fire hose to spray down burning plane crash debris during a training exercise Thursday night outside Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

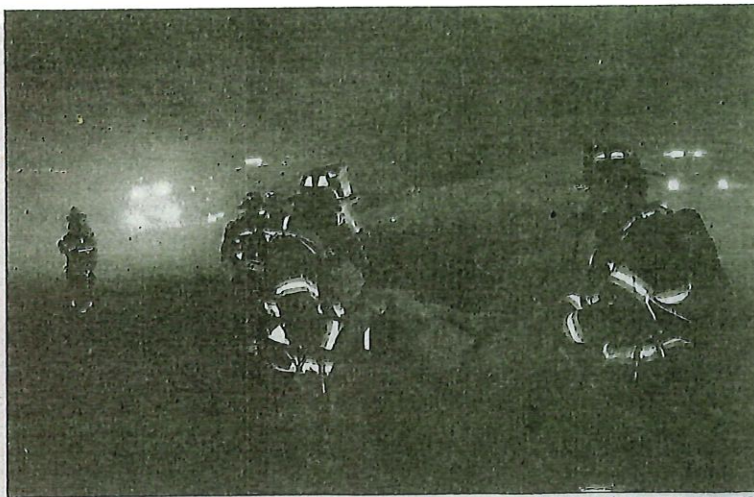
scenario. The sessions were held on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evening inside of the Mount Vernon Airport property.

"So we thrive on our training to get better. Drills like this (are) a real test of

our training," said MVFD Lt. Doug Boczek at Thursday night's training. "And this is a test of, is our training working, do we need to adjust our training throughout the year and this is how we determine (that).

... This is going to determine what adjustments we need to make in our own training, or the airport's emergency plan. ...There's

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EXTRICATION REQUIRED — Mount Vernon firefighters carry a dummy out of an airplane during a training exercise Thursday night near Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

TRAINING

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going to be some adjustments coming. This is why we've got to do it."

Mount Vernon/Jefferson County first responders are required to hold a night drill for aircraft emergency training once a year. Last week's training was unique in that it was held in the exact location near the runways where a plane crash would most likely occur, Boczek said. Boczek credited Airport Director Chris Collins for his help and expertise in organizing the training session.

"This is the exact spot on the airport property that (Collins) says, it's not if, it's when this happens, as a pilot," Boczek said. "So this is the first time we've actually come out here and done this in the spot he's worried about, so it's awesome that we get to come out and do it in a very very real world scenario. ... Chris has done an amazing job. Chris is pretty renowned throughout most of southern Illinois for his expertise on being an airport manager and running our airport rescue firefighting program."

Collins also remarked on the importance of the aircraft emergency training.



TRAINING EXERCISE — Local first responders were pleased with the results of a plane crash training exercise held last week in Mount Vernon.

"Well, we want to be response-ready at all times, and this just keeps them sharp," Collins said, emphasizing how realistic the training is. "It's not theoretical, this is as close as it gets. ... And most airports don't have something like this. ... It's actually a real plane on a trailer."

Thursday night's training exercise began with a call going out that a plane had crashed near Mount Vernon Airport. Mount Vernon firefighters responded and used a fire hose to spray down the aircraft that was on fire. Then, firefighters had to force their way into the plane to extricate someone (a dummy) that was trapped inside, stabilize the person, and prepare them for a medical transport via helicopter. How the agencies communicated with each other

during the response was also part of the exercise.

Boczek said that he was pleased with how the training went.

"It's phenomenal that we have an airport manager here that is not only so dedicated to the airport, but to us as firefighters, that he'll just let us come out here," Boczek said of Collins. "It's great to have a playground. And he doesn't care what we do, he loves it, he'll let us come out here and do something like this tonight. This is great, we love this."

Collins also praised the Mount Vernon Fire Department for their great work.

"It's wonderful to work with such a dedicated team of professionals at the Mount Vernon Fire Department, and I've been blessed to have been integrated with them for over 20 years," Collins said.

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