

Discussion-Based Exercise

The Role of the Airport Chaplain in the Aftermath of an On-Airport Aircraft Accident

Setting the Scene:

It's 01:00 am, during your evening peak period at the airport. You have been at work since 6 pm the previous evening, and you are due to finish at 2:00 am. You are the only Chaplain available at the airport. An aircraft experiences an unexpected collapse of its landing gear during landing. The aircraft careens off the runway at high speed, bursting into flames on the side of the runway after the wing strikes the ground. You are made aware of survivors with minimal injury, seriously injured, who will be transported to multiple different hospitals in the local area, as well as deceased. The triage process is underway; however, information is scarce, and coordination is currently minimal. This flight is carrying up to 350 passengers from more than 30 nationalities and originates in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Family and friends are waiting in the terminal building. The accident occurred in full view of a glass window in departures, and there were many witnesses, including staff off the apron and ramp. The awaiting families and friends do not have a direct view of the accident site. Assume this airport has your chaplaincy service outlined in their Airport Emergency Plan (AEP) and is requesting your assistance.



Source: NBC News. Image of Japan Airlines A350 at Haneda Airport is for scenario understanding only.

Group 1: Creating the Plan

Your focus is on creating a plan to coordinate and carry out your efforts.

Which stakeholders will you need to work with to ensure a coordinated response effort?

What are your priorities?

What tasks occur in the short term, medium term, and long term?

Focus on your pragmatic and procedural approach. List and discuss what you need to do, in what order, and who else can support you.

Group 2: Supporting the Physically Uninjured Survivors

Your main responsibility is supporting the uninjured Survivors who are entering the Survivor Reception Centre. This is a basic gate lounge facility, with minimal amenities available. You understand there are multiple nationalities that may be affected.

Create a plan for how you may support these individuals. Consider all aspects of your role when supporting the uninjured survivors.

What may your challenges be?

Group 3: Supporting the awaiting Family and Friends at the Airport

There are many families and friends in your arrivals area awaiting the arrival of this flight. They are slowly learning about the accident through social media and conversations building in the arrival's hall. You are aware of the diverse nationalities impacted, and you are also aware of the large numbers of injured and deceased.

Your priority is to support the family and friends who are waiting in the arrivals area.

Consider all aspects of your role when supporting the awaiting family & friends.

Group 4: Focus on Cultural Diversity

Your priority is to consider the cultural context of the people directly affected.

Consider a flight that accommodates more than 30 different nationalities, representing a diverse range of religious groups.

List & discuss the challenges and opportunities that may arise during a multinational accident response at your airport.

What do you see as your greatest challenge, and how may you solve this challenge

Group 5: Staff & Employee Welfare

Your priority is supporting the employees at the airport who may have seen or been affected by this tragedy.

Which stakeholders will you need to work with?

How may you offer the best possible support to these individuals?

What additional services may be offered to them for the longer term?

What do you anticipate to be the greatest challenges?

At the conclusion of the short discussion we will regroup and discuss your different perspectives, highlight challenges and work towards meaningful solutions to aid in providing the best possible support in the aftermath of tragedy.