

Tri-Cities Airport  
Tri-Cities Airport Authority

# Irregular Operations (IROPS) Contingency Plan

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## Introduction

This document provides the Irregular Operations (IROPS) Contingency Plan for Tri-Cities Airport (TRI). This Plan recognizes that individual service provider plans and a coordinated effort by the airlines, airports, government agencies, and other aviation service providers are essential to successfully minimizing the impact of IROPS events on passengers.

## Point of Contact

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## Use of Terms

The following is a list of terms and definitions used throughout this Plan.

**Irregular Operations (IROPS)** – Exceptional events that require actions and/or capabilities beyond those considered usual by aviation service providers. Generally speaking, an impact of these events is the occurrence of passengers experiencing delays, often in unexpected locations for an undetermined amount of time. Examples include extreme weather events (such as snowstorms, hurricanes, tornados), geological events (such as earthquakes, volcanoes), and other events (such as power outages or security breaches). These events can result in lengthy tarmac delays with passengers on an aircraft or other unexpected delays for passengers.

**Tarmac Delay** - A tarmac delay is defined as the time after an aircraft leaves the gate with passengers until the time the aircraft departs the airport without accessing the terminal, or the time after an aircraft lands prior to accessing the terminal.

**Airlines** – Air Carriers operating scheduled service at TRI.

**CBP** – Customs and Border Protection

**FAA** – Federal Aviation Administration, including all forms of air traffic control (ATC) services.

**Passengers** – Includes people traveling, service animals in the cabin, and live cargo onboard air carrier aircraft.

**Service Providers** – All entities associated with TRI that provide services for customers and passengers including but not limited to: airports, airlines, concessionaires, ground transportation agencies, government agencies, fixed base operators (FBO), overnight accommodations, emergency response, military (if joint-use facility), and diversion airports.

**TSA** – Transportation Security Administration

**Section 1 – Airport Information**

**1.1 Airport Description**

Tri-Cities Airport, TN/VA (“TRI” or “Airport”) is a commercial airport serving Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina and Eastern Kentucky. TRI is operated by the Tri-Cities Airport Authority (TCAA). The TCAA is governed by a 12-person Board appointed by the Airport's owners: the Cities of Kingsport, Bristol, Johnson City, TN and Bristol, VA; Washington and Sullivan Counties, TN.

TRI is centrally located between the cities of Bristol, Kingsport and Johnson City, Tennessee, just 3 miles off Interstate 81 at Exit 63. The Airport's property covers approximately 1,225 acres, including an 118,835-sq-ft.-terminal, an Air Cargo Logistics Center, a fixed based operator, corporate hangars, and FAA air traffic control tower.

**1.2 Airfield**

Primary Runway: Runway 5-23 is 8,000 ft. long by 150 ft. wide and equipped with a CAT-II Instrument Landing System.

Secondary Runway: Runway 9-27 is 4,442 ft. long x 150 ft. wide and has a non-precision approach.

**1.3 Passenger Terminal**

The main terminal offers travelers a restaurant, gift shop, ATMs, and complimentary internet service. Rental car and taxi/limo services are available. The passenger concourse provides seven airline gates, arrival and departure status monitors, restrooms, food and beverage, and news and gift concessions.

**Section 2 – Scheduled Service and IROPS Events**

## **2.1 Schedule Passenger Service**

TRI is classified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a Non-Hub Airport, and served 222,082 enplaned passengers in calendar year 2011. **Exhibit A (Flight Schedule)** contains a list of TRI's currently scheduled air service as of the issuance of this plan.

## **2.2 Causes of IROPS Events**

Causes of IROPS events can include a number of conditions such as extreme weather, geological events, reduction of airport facility capacity, aircraft mechanical problems, and labor issues. The impacts of IROPS events include flight delays, cancellations, and diversions resulting in potentially adverse impacts on passengers and other airport customers.

## **2.3 Review of Local IROPS Events**

A review of available airline performance data indicates schedule airline flights departing TRI have an average completion rate exceeding 98%. The on-time departure data indicates that air carrier's scheduled departures are on-time in excess of 90% of the time. A review of available records covering the past five years did not identify any incidents of passengers experiencing excessive tarmac delays at TRI.

## **2.4 Air Carrier IROPS Response Plans**

It is recognized that scheduled airlines serving TRI have their own plans for response to IROPS events. It is also recognized that United States DOT's rules on enhancing airline passenger protections (14 CFR Part 259 – Enhanced Protection for Airline Passengers) require air carriers to adopt tarmac delay contingency plans and coordinate those plans with airports.

# **Section 3 – IROPS Event Planning and Coordination**

Response to an evolving IROPS event depends on timely shared situational awareness among all aviation service providers. Relevant IROPS information includes the early identification of a potential IROPS situation and the evolving IROPS condition as the event evolves.

The following service providers have been considered in local IROPS planning efforts and response procedures. As applicable to each IROP event, coordination with the entities identified in the following sections may be needed. The attached **Exhibit B (TRI Service Provider Contact Information)** contains the organizational name and contact information for the various service providers associated with TRI. Periodic updates to this Exhibit B will be distributed by TCAC as needed.

## **3.1 Airlines**

The US Department of Transportation has issued a rulemaking that requires airlines to adopt tarmac delay contingency plans and coordinate them with both scheduled airports they serve and their diversion airports. Scheduled airlines operating out of TRI have implemented procedures pertaining to the DOT "3-Hour Rule" and "4-Hour Rule" relating to IROPS event response. As needed, Airlines will provide updates to their individual tarmac delay contingency plans to associated service providers.

## **3.2 FAA**

The FAA has issued directives to air traffic personnel pertaining to aircraft making tarmac delay requests related to United States DOT's 14 CFR Part 359 Enhanced Protection for Airline Passengers.

### **3.3 TSA**

The Department of Homeland Security has issued procedures to TSA Federal Security Directors concerning establishing and utilizing secure areas using procedures in the Airport Security Program or Aircraft Operator Standard Security Program.

### **3.4 CBP**

The CBP has issued guidance to directors of field operations concerning passengers on diversion flights, including those into airports not normally staffed by CBP. TRI does not currently have scheduled international air carrier operations. A CBP office is located at TRI related to Customs Port #2027 and Foreign Trade Zone #204. The local CBP office is not equipped to handle large volumes of international passengers. The local CBP office would serve as TCAC's initial point of contact with the CBP in the event of IROPS involving an international flight.

To the extent practicable with available resources to TRI, we will coordinate with local CBP and law enforcement officials to identify suitable areas and procedures for establishing a temporary sterile area into which international passengers on diverted aircraft who have not yet cleared United States Customs and Border Protection can be deplaned. Once these efforts are complete, we will coordinate with local CBP officials to develop procedures that will allow international passengers who have not cleared United States Customs and Border Protection to be deplaned into these sterile areas to the extent practicable.

### **3.5 Concessions**

Concessions at TRI may be requested to provide service during IROPS events, including those resulting in extended passenger stay in the terminal area. Concessions operators may be requested to remain open during extended hours and provide support for special-needs passengers.

### **3.6 Ground Transportation**

Ground transportation organizations may be requested to provide service during IROPS events, including those resulting in extended passenger stay in the terminal area.

### **3.7 Other Service Providers**

In addition to the service providers identified in the previous section, other entities may be coordinated with during IROPS events. The list below identifies some service providers that may be requested to provide services during IROPS events.

- Alternate transportation providers (taxi, limo, bussing companies, rental car agencies)
- Overnight accommodations (nearby hotels)
- FBOs
- Off-site restaurants
- Emergency response (LEO, fire, EMT)
- Red Cross
- Special needs service providers (wheelchairs, TTD, translators etc.)

### **3.8 Airport (TCAA)**

The following TCAA departments can provide assistance in contacting and coordinating efforts of various service providers:

- Airport Services Counter
- Airport Communications Center
- Airport Public Safety Department (medical assistance, emergency response, etc.)
- Airport Operations Department
- Airport Administration

## **Section 4 – Cooperative Action During IROPS Events**

### **4.1 Trigger Events and Communications Plans**

IROPS events require coordinated response actions by airport operations, the airlines, ATC services to track and share aircraft status both in-air and on-ground. Based on the situational need, additional communications among other organizations such as the TSA, CBP, concessions, and ground transportation may also be required.

### **4.2 Aircraft Status Monitoring and IROPS Event Notification**

Aircraft status in the air and on the ground is tracked by the airlines to provide accurate, complete, and timely information in regard to expected flight delays and developing local situations. Airlines station personnel will monitor tarmac delays/IROPS and have been requested to notify the TCAA Communications Center (Com Center) when an aircraft containing passengers has experienced a tarmac delay at TRI exceeding 2.0 hours. The Com Center Operator will notify the on-duty supervisor for the TCAC Public Safety Department that an aircraft that has experienced a 2.0 hour tarmac delay with passengers on the aircraft.

At the point TCAA receives the 2.0 hour tarmac delay notification, the supervisor for the TCAA Public Safety department will contact the airline supervisor and request an update on the airline's intention for deplaning the aircraft, continuing the tarmac hold, or the estimated departure of the aircraft. The TCAA Public Safety Department supervisor will ask the airline supervisor to indicate if any support may be requested from TCAA or other service providers for the IROPS event. As needed, the TCAA Public Safety Department will assist in contacting the various TCAA departments or service providers associated with the requested airline support.

### **4.3 Deplanement of Passengers**

TCAA has limited equipment and personnel needed to safely deplane passengers from air carrier aircraft. We will utilize this equipment to deplane passengers as soon as practicable after receiving requests from such airlines at the contact number listed above. We will also provide a list of airlines, ground handlers, fixed base operators and others who may have the necessary equipment and personnel to safely deplane passengers to airlines as soon as practicable after receiving requests from such airlines experiencing excessive tarmac delays at the contact number listed above

#### **4.4 Availability of Aircraft Gate Facilities**

The passenger concourse and associated airline gate areas at TRI are operated on a non-exclusive use basis. Airlines use these areas on a Preferential Use basis. Preferential Use Areas refer to specific passenger hold rooms and gate positions in the airline common use area of the concourse for which specific airlines have been given a preferential assignment on a non-exclusive basis. The Airport Authority reserves the ability to assign the right for any airline to use such hold rooms and gate positions when not being used by a preferentially assigned airline. As such, any of the seven gates located on the concourse would be available to airlines for deplaning operations if it did not conflict with another scheduled airline operation.

#### **4.5 Passenger Support Plans**

Service provider support for passengers during IROPS events include while they are on board aircraft, during their deplaning, in the terminal, and when they need ground transportation.

#### **4.6 After an IROPS Event**

After an IROPS event, it is important to have a timely and comprehensive assessment of the event. The TCAA will coordinate any needed debriefing meeting and include aviation service providers associated with an IROPS event. As needed, this IROPS Plan may be updated with improved practices, procedures, and coordinated response. TCAA will determine the frequency and specific agenda for meetings intended to review and update the IROPS Plan. TCAA will also conduct an IROPS service provider meeting at the request of one of TRI's scheduled air carriers.

Tri-Cities Airport will provide access to its Tarmac Delay Contingency Plan by posting it in a conspicuous location on the Airport's website at <https://www.triflight.com/>