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Wis. technical college spearheads initiative to up airport security; *develops general aviation training with Homeland Security grant*

Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) in Waukesha, Wis., recently spearheaded an initiative to develop general aviation security training. WCTC applied for, and received a \$750,000 U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant to develop security training to prevent criminal and terrorist use of general aviation facilities and aircraft. The College partnered with WIDS to develop the training.

Preventing Criminal Use of Aircraft and Facilities

The free training – available in June to airport stakeholders and their local emergency response providers – will be delivered via two methods: online and face-to-face. As part of the training, general aviation airports develop cost-effective security plans involving local police and fire

departments, according to Jim Kerr, a 33-year veteran of airport management. Kerr spent 23 years at General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee as Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer. Now retired, he's leading development of the "General Aviation Security Training" – courses delivering cost-effective security solutions to even the smallest general aviation operation. The courses are offered at WCTC and several on-site locations across the country. The online courses are offered via WCTC.

The goal is two-pronged: to prevent the criminal use of general aviation aircraft and facilities and to enable first responders to respond safely and effectively to incidents.

The free training is great for general aviation, says Kerr, because finding the resources to fund security training and/or technologies isn't easy for aviation operations that cater to anything from crop dusters and corporate jets, to cargo planes. The only categories not included under the general aviation umbrella are airports for military aircraft or commercial airlines.

Developed in Wisconsin with U.S. Department of Homeland Security funds

The General Aviation Security Training was developed in Wisconsin with help from a \$750,000 DHS grant; WIDS; general aviation associations and organizations; aviation and emergency-response content experts; and WCTC.

"The aim of the DHS-funded project is to enhance general aviation security within a community that has already taken a very successful and proactive stance with regard to security," says Kerr.

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A plane motors to the runway at Sebring Regional Airport in Sebring, Fla.

Curriculum Focuses on Performance; Relies on Experts

To develop the training curriculum, WCTC partnered with WIDS, which offers performance-based curriculum software, training and consulting. Most of the courses and programs offered by Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges are designed using the WIDS performance-based model and software. WIDS was used to facilitate the development process and provide a common design and framework. Aviation, law enforcement and fire experts were also called in, with Kerr as project manager, to ensure curriculum content accuracy.

WIDS Consultant George Skerritt helped mediate the collaboration process and hone the new curriculum into performance-based training. He worked to establish competencies, performance standards, learning activities and assessment tasks for both online and traditional delivery.

"One of the features of all four courses is the airport watch program," says Skerritt. "We want people near airports, as well as airport personnel, to understand what normal operations are so they can help identify incidents before they occur. We are also trying to enhance the interaction of general aviation airports with their local fire and police

"Stakeholders apply skills and come away with a security plan. Emergency responders exit training with an airport familiarization plan."

—Jim Kerr, Project Manager

organizations so that responses can be swift and well-coordinated."

"General aviation is very diverse and a one-size-fits-all approach won't work," adds Kerr of the training. This is because general aviation can encompass small airports, such as a farmer's grassy runway and crop duster, on up to large facilities with massive cargo jets, single-engine planes and corporate aircraft. As a result, the training blends several important points, including an airport's current aviation security efforts; the diversity of general aviation; and the limited resources of general aviation and its airports.



A line-up of general aviation aircraft await pilots at Sebring Regional Airport in Sebring, Fla.

Involving Local Emergency Responders

"General aviation airports are largely left to manage their own affairs in terms of security," says Kerr. "They aren't regulated like airline airports. The training is designed to train general aviation stakeholders such as pilots, mechanics, airport operators and airport businesses," he says. Airline airports have their own emergency responders, but general aviation airports do not. As such, general aviation, according to Kerr, depends on local emergency responders.

Thus, the new security training targets both local emergency responders and airport stakeholders. "The training enhances learning by requiring stakeholders to apply knowledge and skills to scenarios," says Kerr. "Stakeholders apply skills and come away with a security plan. Emergency responders exit training with an airport familiarization training plan."

After completing training, police and fire departments can then work with their local airports to train their personnel, familiarizing them with airport layout, security processes and response plans.

A Focus on People

"The first line of defense at any airport is your people," says Kerr. "If the people side isn't working, even high-tech security technologies have no value. Much of our training focuses on the people and cost-appropriate solutions."