



## CHARLES M. SCHULZ - SONOMA COUNTY AIRPORT

Jon G. Stout, Airport Facilities Manager

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# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Airport Crew – Ready, Willing, and VERY Able!

A red alert alarm comes in from the Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT). A plane is coming in without functioning landing gear and will have to slide in on its belly, a tricky and dangerous maneuver. Airport Service Workers spring into action, quickly put on their silver fireproof suits, alert other response teams, and within three minutes are at the runway where the plane is expected to land. When the plane comes in, Airport firefighters and emergency personnel will be waiting to assist.

Charles M. Schulz - Sonoma County Airport (STS), a division of the County's Transportation and Public Works Department, is staffed by a group of individuals well trained in Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Operations. There are currently eight on-site employees and several more in administration at the County Center. More employees are expected to join the ranks in the near future before the start of Horizon Air service on March 20, 2007. On-site employees include the Airport Manager Jon Stout and office staff, but also working diligently at the 1,165 acre Airport are an Airport Operations Supervisor and five experienced Airport Service Workers.

Although without commercial airline service since October 2001, many aircraft fly in and out of STS every day. Private planes, business jets, military training flights, and public service helicopters are some of the aircraft activity seen daily. When commercial air service returns next year, workers will be trained to assist those aircraft as well.

Owned and operated by the County, STS is governed by the rules and regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Airport Service Workers undergo continual training to meet FAA standards. Most importantly, they are fully trained to save lives in an emergency.

Firefighting and rescue techniques are part of their rigorous training, and a yearly "live" fire drill at a specialty firefighting school is also included. STS has two on-site fire engines. A new engine will replace

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the older of the two this summer. The new state-of-the-art truck meets commercial airline requirements and has a 1,500-gallon water tank.

Airport Service Workers are first responders, the very first in line in a medical emergency. They take yearly CPR training after an initial 40-hour first responder medical training, covering a host of topics that the FAA requires for medical response. This course is repeated every three years. The staff also undergoes frequent aircraft familiarization. They are required to know the mechanics of all the different types of aircraft equipment coming and going from STS. They may be called upon to assist disabled people from an impaired aircraft or put out a fire in a cargo hold. From two-seaters to Gulfstreams, CDF bombers to commercial jets, they know their way around a plane.

Steve Lange, Airport Operations Supervisor, has been at STS for 10 years and has not experienced a major disaster at the Airport during that time. There are about 4 red alerts a year, including gear collapse, stopped engines, or other serious things that may cause an emergency landing or possible crash. There are also yellow and white alerts for less dangerous situations such as rough running engines, where staff is ready to assist. There are 40-60 incidents a year when the alert system is activated.

The primary focus of the intensive training is to save lives and get people out of an aircraft in an emergency. Staff also fights structural fires that may occur in hangars and other buildings. They respond to natural disasters such as earthquakes and flooding, to hazardous materials spills, power failures, wildlife hazard management, and perform routine maintenance on Airport property. Airport security and enforcing Airport regulations are also important parts of their job. When commercial service is acquired, the Transportation Security Administration will provide security for commercial aircraft. STS partners with the Rincon Valley Fire Department when needed, and other fire departments and emergency services providers will also respond in the case of a major event.

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