



# **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Airports Do an About-Face on Safety Policy**

WASHINGTON, DC – Transportation unions are disappointed to learn that the nation’s big airports have taken the position that improving firefighting standards at airports will not improve safety. Opposition to these much-needed safety improvements is indefensible. It also represents a surprising reversal of previous Congressional testimony by Airports Council International, North America (ACI-NA), a trade association of U.S airports.

Previously, ACI-NA noted that it “supports FAA initiating the rulemaking process” when commenting on the pending House FAA reauthorization bill. By contrast, ACI-NA reported that it now opposes “any effort to move forward on changes to existing Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting requirements” in a recent press release.

“We find it hard to understand why ACI-NA would join the overheated rhetoric employed by the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) that updating 20-year-old firefighting standards at the nation’s airports will put them out of business,” said Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD). “Our members’ priority is to ensure that the flying public and flight crews are protected when accidents or incidents require an emergency response – not to cause economic harm to America’s airports.”

TTD reiterated its support for updating firefighting regulations and requirements in a letter to House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) agrees that airport firefighting standards are outdated. “The Safety Board believes that the FAA should amend 14 CFR 139.319(j) to require a minimum ARFF staffing level that would allow exterior firefighting and rapid entry into an airplane to perform interior firefighting and rescue of passengers and crewmembers,” the NTSB wrote in 2001 as part of an investigation of an airline crash in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The FAA should have already updated firefighting standards because the law requires federal agencies to comply with national voluntary consensus standards. All other standards-making bodies that address airport firefighting, including the Department of Defense (DOD), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have standards for safe and effective airport and rescue firefighting that far exceed FAA standards.

“We support the House’s FAA bill with airport firefighting provisions on staffing levels, response times, hazmat handling, vehicle deployment and equipment modernization requirements,” Wytkind said. “We hope the big airports, and the public bodies that govern

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them, reconsider and distance themselves from AAAE's irresponsible campaign. If resources really are at issue at the nation's smaller airports, I'm confident that the airports, airlines, and FAA can agree on a strategy to deal with small airports' needs."

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*The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org).*