

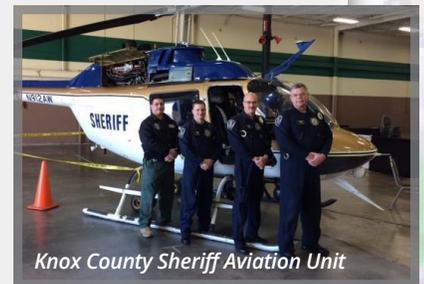
## Emergency/Medical

Tennessee airports play a vital role in statewide and national emergency response efforts. Across the state, airports house local emergency and law enforcement agencies, serve as operation centers for emergency response efforts, support numerous military installations, and provide critical life-saving emergency medical services. Tennessee airports are well positioned to serve in disaster and emergency training, response, and relief efforts. Examples of such efforts by Tennessee's airports are documented below.

### Emergency Response – Knox County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit Serves the Region from the Air

Across Tennessee, numerous airports serve as bases for local firefighting, emergency medical services (EMS), and law enforcement operations. A great example of this is the Knox County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit, located at Knoxville Downtown Island Airport (DKX). Formed in 1996 with the purchase of surplus military helicopters, the fleet today consists of five helicopters, operated by nine full-time staff, that are used for multiple law enforcement efforts, such as perpetrator pursuits, officer safety training, drug-bust support, marijuana eradication, special operations, and search-and-rescue missions.

The Knox County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit also supports statewide and national disaster response and relief efforts. After Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans in 2005, the Knox County Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit flew three helicopters and six pilots to Louisiana to rescue people trapped in the hurricane's damage. The unit also successfully responded to a major flooding event in Middle and East Tennessee in 2019, providing critical surveying and flood damage assessment support.



### Natural Disasters – When Disaster Strikes, Tennessee Airports are Ready

Tennessee airports are critical partners in responding when natural disasters strike. In 2016, a forest fire burned more than 119,000 acres across the southeast region of the United States, and firefighters across the country responded. Tennessee airports played a big role in this effort by serving as operation centers for incoming firefighters and aircraft. For example, McGhee Tyson Airport (TYS) received 100 incoming firefighters from the west coast, and Lovell Field (CHA) served as a base for firefighting helicopters and air tankers to load water and fire retardant.

While airports serve a crucial role in natural disaster response, they can also be impacted by natural disasters themselves. John C. Tune Airport (JWN) was severely impacted when an EF-2 tornado struck Middle Tennessee in March 2020. The storm caused an estimated \$93 million worth of damage to the airport, causing it to close operations for two weeks. Since reopening, John C. Tune Airport has continued to serve its role as one of Tennessee's busiest general aviation airports and is back on track to complete important projects, such as the construction of a \$10 million air traffic control tower.



## Emergency/Medical

### Tennessee National Guard – Standing at The Ready for National Emergencies

The Tennessee Air National Guard has four bases across the state, three of which are located at Tennessee airports. The Tennessee Air National Guard 119th Command and Control Squadron operates out of the McGhee Tyson National Guard Base at McGhee Tyson Airport (TYS). The primary mission of this squadron is to provide in-flight refueling to all US Armed Forces and allied nations' aircraft. They also transport cargo, personnel, and conduct medevac operations.

The 164th Airlift Wing of the Tennessee Air National Guard operates out of Memphis International Airport (MEM). In 2020, they completed a mission to fly 500,000 swabs for COVID-19 testing kits from an Italian airbase to Memphis International Airport for distribution throughout the country.

In addition to the Air National Guard, Tennessee airports also support the Tennessee Army National Guard. The Tennessee Army National Guard located at the Smyrna Airport (MQY) serves as a military flight training facility, emergency response training facility, and a hurricane evacuation point for military bases along the Gulf and East Coasts. In 2019, Smyrna Airport was part of a joint agency effort supporting and facilitating Shaken Fury, a national-level emergency response and recovery training effort hosted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



Photo: *The National Guard Sgt. Juanita Philip*

### Medical Operations – Air Ambulance Rapid Response Transport

Twenty Tennessee airports house based air ambulance operators who provide emergency transportation for patients across the state. One such operator is Vanderbilt LifeFlight, the critical-care air medical transport service of Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. Vanderbilt LifeFlight provides emergency medical patient transportation via nine helicopters and one airplane based at airports across Tennessee.

Vanderbilt LifeFlight helicopters provide rapid access to definitive care across Middle Tennessee, parts of West and East Tennessee, Southern Kentucky, and Northern Alabama. Vanderbilt LifeFlight's airplane, a medically-configured Pilatus PC-12, is based out of Nashville International Airport (BNA). The airplane has impressive capabilities, traveling a range of 1,742 miles and transporting patients up to 900 miles non-stop at travel speeds up to 322 miles per hour, enabling it to transport patients from across the region to Vanderbilt Medical Facilities. At airports, Vanderbilt LifeFlight ground ambulances support operations by transporting patients from airports to appropriate hospitals. Since 1984 Vanderbilt LifeFlight has flown more than 43,000 patients – an average of almost 2,000 per year. In 2020, Vanderbilt LifeFlight was named the 2020 Air Medical Program of the Year by the Association of Air Medical Services.



### Overview

Tennessee airports play a vital role in responding to local emergencies and national natural disasters by serving as centers for personnel, supplies, and aircraft. Numerous firefighting, EMS, law enforcement, and military units are housed at Tennessee airports, standing ready to respond to emergencies of all scales across the nation and beyond its borders.