Meigs and Public Safety

An Overview of the Utility of Meigs Field for
Emergency Response, Public Safety, and Disaster Relief
September 20, 2001

Executive Summary

Meigs Field is a critical part of Chicago's public safety, emergency response and disaster relief infrastructure. Meigs saves lives every day, and its presence is vital to emergency planning for the central business district, particularly in light of dangers to modern society.

1. Air Traffic Control

Meigs Field provides crucial air traffic control services for aircraft over downtown Chicago, preventing collisions, traffic conflicts, and providing early warning of intentional or unintentional deviations from proper flight paths.

2. Aeromedical Transport

Meigs Field is the closest airport and heliport to many downtown Chicago hospitals, providing transport for critically injured patients and donor organs.

In time of emergency or public disaster, Meigs Field could be used to evacuate large numbers of casualties.

3. Air-Sea Rescue

Meigs Field provides vital air-sea rescue services for persons in danger on Lake Michigan. Both the Chicago Fire Department and the U.S. Coast Guard use Meigs Field for rescue and patrol operations.

4. Rooftop Rescue

Meigs Field is the only nearby heliport for rooftop evacuation and emergency service delivery in case of high-rise fire or other disaster.

In the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, NYC police helicopters evacuated 135 people from the roof of the towers by police helicopter, and shuttled 125 emergency personnel to the buildings.

5. Disaster Preparedness

In the unthinkable event of a public disaster in downtown Chicago, Meigs Field is the only nearby airport and heliport for medical evacuation, disaster service delivery, and military staging.

Meigs Field is capable of handling military helicopters and cargo planes carrying over 100 people or over 90 medical litters.

By: The Friends of Meigs Field
P.O. Box 59-7308
Chicago, IL 60659
773-465-0388
FAX 847-966-6168
www.friendsofmeigs.org

Friends of Meigs Field

and The Meigs Action Coalition
P.O. Box 147055
Chicago, IL 60614
773-248-4310
www.meigsaction.net

Meigs Action Coalition

Note: The Friends of Meigs Field and the Meigs Action Coalition had been working to document the value of Meigs Field for air safety, public health and safety, aeromedical evacuation, and air-sea rescue operations. When the horrific events of September 11, 2001 occurred in New York City, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania, the scope was expanded to include the role Meigs might play in disaster relief and emergency preparedness.