

Port Authority of NY & NJ Enhances Air Travel Through Series of Measures, Receives GBAC Accreditation



Opportunity

Founded in 1921, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) operates four commercial airports – John F. Kennedy International Airport, Newark Liberty International Airport, LaGuardia Airport, and New York Stewart International Airport – that serve more than 140 million passengers annually. It also operates Teterboro Airport, the busiest aviation relief airport in the United States.

PANYNJ’s responsibilities extend beyond air travel. It also oversees the Port of New York and New Jersey, the PATH transit line, bus terminals, bridges, and tunnels. These transportation solutions support the people and businesses of the region every day.

“Our world-class transportation infrastructure is essential to economic growth and helping people move by air, land, rail, and sea,” said Huntley A. Lawrence, Acting Chief Operating Officer and Director of Aviation, PANYNJ. “Though passenger travel dropped sharply due to the pandemic, the majority of the Aviation Department was engaged in essential work related to our transportation and logistics infrastructure. It was our duty and responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of our customers and employees.”

Solution



The Port Authority has a robust emergency response plan and safety management system that was previously mobilized for infectious diseases like swine flu, Ebola, and Zika virus. In response to COVID-19, PANYNJ formed a Resumption of Service task force with representatives from all five airports. The group was dedicated to the safe return of customers and employees and rebuilding confidence in air travel, with a focus on health, hygiene, and cleanliness.

“We wanted to be sure that our COVID-19 response plan was best-in-class and effective in dealing with the size and scale of this particular risk. PANYNJ actively sought established health and safety certification and accreditation programs and became



aware of GBAC STAR[™] Facility Accreditation through our membership and active participation with the American Association of Airport Executives,” added Lawrence.

The accreditation program from the Global Biorisk Advisory Council[™], a Division of ISSA, helps businesses prepare for, respond to, and recover from biorisks. GBAC STAR is specifically designed for organizations that want to hold their facilities to a higher standard of cleanliness. Participating facilities must document and demonstrate compliance with 20 program elements, including a facility commitment statement, tools and equipment, personnel training, and more.

“We recognized GBAC STAR accreditation would be another important building block to strengthen our organization’s foundation,” said Lawrence. “The program instills confidence in our customers, employees, and key stakeholders that our airports and facilities are prioritizing health and safety in a measurable, established manner.

PANYNJ communicated about its airports’ accreditation to employees and partners in airport-wide and department-wide meetings, and official communications from senior executives. To make the public aware, it communicated about GBAC STAR through social media, signs, and public address

announcements in the airports. PANYNJ also continuously collects customer feedback related to health and hygiene metrics through its Airport Service Quality (ASQ) surveys, real-time feedback technology, audits and inspections, and social media monitoring.

Results



PANYNJ has discovered many advantages associated with accreditation of its airports, including:

- **Holistic view of operations.** Employees and airport partners noted that GBAC STAR accreditation allowed them to view operations holistically and systematically. The airports assessed the entire passenger journey including interactions with employees to determine if the measures put in place as part of the resumption of service plan were effective. Some changes that were implemented during the process include standardized use of risk assessments, evaluating staff training, consolidation of critical documentation in a central repository, and monitoring and control of processes.

- **Consistent standard of cleanliness.** The largest challenge was aligning practices, policies, and approaches to drive consistency across numerous facilities. GBAC STAR gave PANYNJ the tools and resources to validate its current measures and establish a standard for cleanliness, staff training, and health and safety across all five airports.

- **Confidence among travelers.** According to Lawrence, “It is important for transportation facilities that welcome passengers from across the globe to uphold the highest standards in cleanliness and hygiene.” Third-party validation of the airports’ cleaning, disinfection, and infection prevention measures gives travelers greater confidence in their health and safety when choosing air travel, especially amid changes in federal and state guidelines.

“With GBAC STAR accreditation, PANYNJ is fulfilling its mission to maintain the highest levels of safety and security for our employees and customers,” added Lawrence. “Based on the value the process brought to our aviation facilities, other transportation facilities at the Port Authority are also pursuing this accreditation.”



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—Huntley A. Lawrence
Acting Chief Operating Officer
and Director of Aviation
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About GBAC, a Division of ISSA

Composed of international leaders in the field of microbial-pathogenic threat analysis, mitigation, response and recovery, the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC), a Division of ISSA, provides training, guidance, accreditation, certification, crisis management assistance and leadership to government, commercial and private entities looking to mitigate, quickly address and/or recover from biological threats and real-time crises. The organization’s services include biorisk management program assessment and training, Forensic Restoration[®] response and remediation, the GBAC STAR[™] facility and service accreditation programs, training and certification of individuals and consulting for building owners and facility managers.

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