

SAFE AIRPORTS: EMPOWERING PASSENGER SERVICE WORKERS TO MAKE FLL SAFER



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The case for ensuring that our airport’s frontline workforce is fully trained and stabilized

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The January 6, 2017 shooting at Fort Lauderdale - Hollywood International Airport (FLL) - and the chaotic passenger self-evacuation that followed - showed that there is a need for a comprehensive whole community approach to emergency management, emergency response and associated training that involves not just public safety agencies but also passenger service workers.

PASSENGER SERVICE EMPLOYEES ARE ON THE FRONT LINE AT FLL

For years airlines have pursued aggressive cost-savings by outsourcing significant and critical portions of their operations to low-wage service contractors, including passenger services. Passenger service contractors employ over 2,000 workers at FLL in several labor-intensive job classifications including skycaps, wheelchair attendants, security checkpoint workers, aircraft cleaners, baggage handlers, security officers and ramp agents. Passenger service workers’ ubiquity and constant contact with passengers and other airport workers make them an integral part of the emergency response and business continuity apparatus at FLL. Operators at other large hub airports such as Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and Miami International Airport (MIA) recognize the critical role of passenger service workers in emergency response and have adopted policies to ensure that these workers are adequately trained and have a more stable workforce. FLL can use these exemplars as best practices for developing its own program to address emergency response concerns.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SEIU Local 32BJ is the largest property service workers union in the country, with more than 163,000 members in 11 states, including Florida, and Washington DC. For the last ten years, SEIU Local 32BJ has been organizing contracted out workers at Fort Lauderdale - Hollywood International Airport, including janitors and passenger service workers, and it currently represents hundreds of them. With the help of SEIU Local 32BJ, workers at the airport have advocated for better working conditions and policies to not only improve their jobs, but also make the airport safer, more efficient and a more effective engine of regional economic growth.



EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION TRAINING

Even though a handful of workers tried, mostly on their own initiative, to help passengers evacuate and to comfort them during the aftermath of the shooting, the vast majority of passenger service workers from various contractors at FLL interviewed and surveyed by SEIU Local 32BJ after the January shooting and its aftermath expressed serious concerns about their level of preparedness for airport emergencies and evacuations. They also expressed frustration at not being able to provide information or guidance to panicked passengers that looked to them for answers during the January shooting and mass self-evacuation. Neither the permits under which passenger service contractors operate at FLL nor County Code include explicit requirements for employees to be trained in emergency response and evacuations. **FLL can adopt training requirements similar to those in place at LAX and SFO, both of which require passenger service contractors to ensure that their employees are fully trained in emergency response and evacuations, among several other topics.** Airport officials at MIA also have the ability to impose training requirements on passenger service contractors as they deem necessary.



BETTER PERMITTING AND CONTRACTOR SCREENING POLICIES

A key factor undermining the ability of passenger service contractor employees to contribute to making the airport more secure is the fact that there are too many companies and that there is no sufficient screening of airline contractors seeking business at FLL. As of March 2017, FLL had airline service provider agreements with over 50 companies, 40 of which are authorized to provide some form of passenger services. Each of the five key categories of passenger services, including “passenger service”, “ground handling and ramp services”, “aircraft cleaning”, “security service”, and “porter service”, has at least 11 different contractors authorized to provide them to airlines at FLL. The excessive number of contractors can potentially impact security and emergency response at the airport because it can destabilize the workforce. With so many contractors competing for limited airline contracts, workers are less likely to have access to full-time hours and stable jobs. Furthermore, enforcing uniform training and other permit requirements on a large number of contractors could be challenging for the regulating agencies at FLL. The authorities managing MIA and McCarran International Airport (LAS) in Las Vegas have established explicit limits on the number of contractors providing specific services to airlines. In addition, providers wishing to provide certain services to airlines at MIA, LAS and LAX are required to go through extensive screening to ensure they are responsible and capable of performing the work. Airline contractors are not subject to any Broward County mandated qualification requirements in order to begin operating at FLL, which has resulted in the presence of contractors with concerning records.

BETTER WAGES AND BENEFITS

Another key area that needs to be addressed to stabilize the passenger services workforce is ensuring that wages and benefits are commensurate with the responsibilities of those workers. There is a strong body of research linking low wages with high employee turnover and poor performance, especially regarding security. Even though passenger service workers are now covered by the Broward County Living Wage Ordinance, which sets minimum wages of \$12.03 with qualifying health benefits or \$13.59 without them, thanks to a policy adopted in 2015 by the Board of County Commissioners, those wages have fallen behind the levels necessary to accomplish the ordinance’s original goal of lifting workers out of poverty. A pivotal issue is the Living Wage Ordinance’s indexing method which, based on adjustments made during the financial crisis in 2008, places caps on increases and have not allowed the rates to keep up with inflation over time. The airports used as model policies for airport security, LAX, SFO and MIA, all have higher minimum wage rates for passenger service contractors.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the problems presented in this report, and help FLL passenger service contractor employees better contribute to making the airport safer and better able to recover quickly from major or minor disruptive events, the Board of County Commissioners of Broward County should adopt the following policies:

→ **Establish mandatory training requirements to prepare workers for emergencies and evacuations.** Passenger service employees should receive at least 40 hours of initial training and 8 hours of annual refreshers, with the time spent in training paid in full by their employers. Training should be provided by certified trainers with minimum qualifications previously approved by BCAD.

→ **Improve the quality of passenger service contractors and limit their numbers.** An appropriate number of providers that have been subjected to a rigorous and transparent screening process can provide stability to their workforce and make enforcement of training and permit requirements by airport officials more effective.

→ **Fix the Living Wage Ordinance so it can encourage the retention of trained and experienced workers.** A Living Wage base rate of \$13.01 per hour would provide full-time employees an income of 110 percent of the federal poverty line, and a health care differential of \$3.09 per hour would at least cover the average premium for an employer-provided health insurance plan. Furthermore, lifting the caps on Living Wage increases and indexing the health care differential to medical care inflation would ensure that the Living Wage rate can continue to fulfill its purpose in future years.





INTRODUCTION

The tragic shooting of January 6, 2017 at Fort Lauderdale - Hollywood International Airport (FLL) and its chaotic aftermath showed that, even though the primary responsibility for dealing with emergencies and getting the airport back under control after the event lies with law enforcement, federal agencies, and airline/airport stakeholders, there is a need for a more comprehensive whole community approach to emergency response, recovery and business continuity that involves all airport workers and stakeholders.

Specifically, over 2,000¹ employees of airline contractors at FLL work for companies providing various services to airlines that in the past were mostly performed by the airlines themselves. These companies are termed “airline service providers” by the Broward County Aviation Department (BCAD), the agency that manages FLL. Contractors providing what is commonly known as “passenger services” employ the vast majority of the workforce of airline service providers at FLL. Passenger service workers are either in positions that are in constant contact with passengers, such as skycaps, wheelchair attendants, baggage porters and ticket checkers, or in positions that are labor-intensive and involve the care and custody of passenger or airline property, including ramp agents, cabin cleaners, janitors and other ground handling positions.

Passenger service workers are frequently the first and most common point of contact for the traveling public and fulfill a number of functions that support the airlines contractual obligations to the airlines. An airline passenger may be greeted by a skycap who will check her in for her flight, then be assisted by a wheelchair agent to get to where she needs to go, have her boarding pass checked by a checkpoint agent, get a glimpse of cabin cleaners doing a quick cleaning of the aircraft before passengers board, and she might even discuss details of her trip with ticket or gate agents. All of these jobs are very likely performed by a passenger service contractor rather than the airline itself.

Of the 2,310 security badges issued to airline service providers, 2,099 of those badges are for companies that provide passenger services, while the rest work for companies that

provide services that are less labor-intensive and that do not routinely involve contact with passengers, such as fueling, light maintenance and ground equipment.²

Considering the passenger service workers’ ubiquity and their constant direct contact with passengers and other airport workers, it is clear that they should be an integral part of the emergency response and business continuity apparatus at FLL. However, to date, passenger service workers have been entirely sidelined and not involved in emergency management and response except as it relates to established challenge procedures and the reporting of suspicious or unusual activities they may observe in the airport environment. Workers from various contractors interviewed and surveyed by SEIU Local 32BJ after the January shooting complained that they do not feel prepared to protect themselves or assist passengers during emergencies, and that the pay they receive is disproportionate to their customer-facing responsibilities and the risk they face at work.³

Outsourcing in the airline industry, where minimizing costs is frequently the dominant goal, created an industry environment where passenger service employees often earn minimum wages and receive few, if any, meaningful benefits or basic training about the environment in which they work. Low wages and benefits usually correlate with high turnover rates and a low level of employee commitment - to their jobs and the airport community. This budget-conscious environment translates into an atmosphere where comprehensive employee training and emergency preparedness are minimized due to the perception of added costs. Most passenger service workers interviewed and surveyed stated that they do not feel they receive adequate training or practice regarding emergency response and evacuations.⁴

Regulating passenger service contractors at FLL has become a challenging proposition because of the large number of companies and the lack of uniformity in their qualifications, experience and size. This report seeks to show how Broward County, as the owner and manager of FLL, can adopt specific policies to stabilize the passenger services workforce and ensure that all workers are fully trained in emergency response, with the goal of contributing to make the airport safer for all stakeholders, including passengers and airport workers. All proposals presented in this report have already been implemented at other airports in the country.

COMPARISON OF REQUIREMENTS ON AIRLINE CONTRACTORS

Category	Passenger Service Contractor Requirement	LAX (CSPP)	SFO (incl. QSP)	MIA (GASP)	FLL
Emergency response and evacuation training requirements	Provide emergency preparedness and evacuation training to employees (initial and recurrent)	Yes, also including First Aid and emergency notification system	Yes	Not in these terms, but must comply with training requirements of government agencies.	No
	Submit training contents and certificates of completion to airport authority	Yes, annually and as requested	Yes, at airport's demand	No	No
Contractor permit limits and screening	Specific limit to the number of permittees for specific job classifications	No	No	Yes	No
	Award of permit approved by airport governing body	No	No	Yes	No
	Responsible contractor determination, pre-award	Yes, including public questionnaire, staff determines	No	Yes, determined by Selection Committee and ultimately the County Commission	No
	Specific amount of experience providing services, pre-award	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Right of airport to audit for compliance at any time	Yes, CSPP rules	Yes, incl. QSP compliance	Yes, but only financial	Yes, but only financial
Living Wage requirements	Base Living Wage rate, per hour	\$12.08	\$14.14	\$12.63	\$12.03
	Provision required for health insurance, per hour	\$5.18	\$4.65	\$2.89	\$1.56
	Living Wage rate without insurance, per hour	\$17.26	\$14.14 + \$4.65 (paid to city)	\$15.52	\$13.59



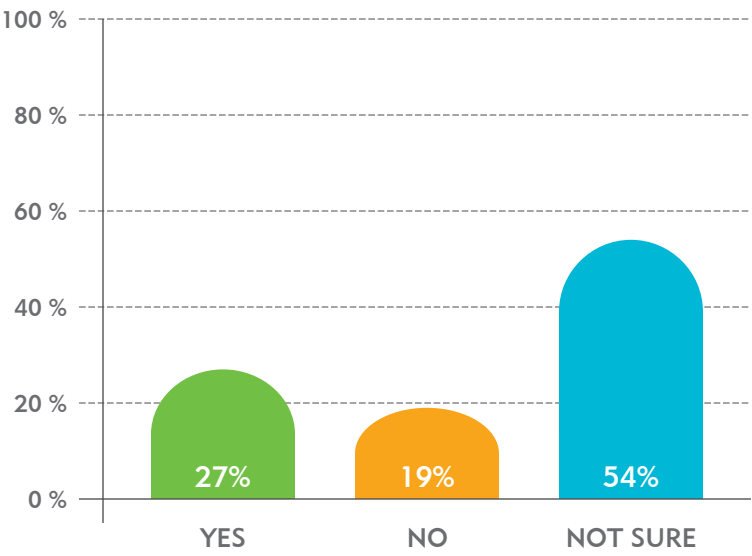
WORKERS DID NOT FEEL ADEQUATELY PREPARED

On Friday, January 6, 2017, FLL-arriving passenger Esteban Santiago went on a shooting rampage in Terminal 2 that left five dead and six wounded.⁵ In the weeks after the shootings, SEIU Local 32BJ conducted interviews and surveys with passenger service workers from various providers at FLL who reflected on what transpired on that day, sharing their experiences and opinions with the hope of that doing so would help make the airport a safer place, not only for themselves but also for passengers and other airport workers.

In general, during interviews and surveys passenger service workers reported feeling uncertainty about what was happening, how to react, and what to tell passengers who looked to them for answers because they were in uniform and assumed to be part of the airport’s emergency response apparatus.⁶ The main problem, as identified by workers, is that they did not get the training they consider adequate to know what to do in a situation like the January 6th shooting or the ensuing confusion and mass self-evacuation.⁷ Furthermore, workers performing wheelchair attendant duties stated that they were not sure how they were supposed to help or protect the elderly and disabled passengers that they regularly assist during the emergency.⁸

A wheelchair attendant interviewed by SEIU Local 32BJ, who works for Bags, Inc., a contractor that services Delta and American Airlines, was assisting two passengers with their luggage when he heard several “pops.” After a moment of confusion, he heard somebody yell *get down!*, and he could only think of hiding under the luggage cart that he regularly uses to assist passengers. Throughout the ensuing chaos, he never saw the shooter’s face, but he was afraid that whoever was doing the shooting would turn towards him eventually. After a couple of minutes, when the shooting stopped, the worker got out from under his luggage cart and ran upstairs for safety. He described with immense sadness and horror seeing the bodies of those killed and injured by the shooter as he ran through Terminal 2.⁹

Do you feel adequately prepared to protect yourself during an emergency situation at the airport?



Source: Survey of 100 passenger service contractor employees at FLL, SEIU 32BJ, April-May 2017

After the shootings, law enforcement quickly subdued the shooter and took back control of Terminal 2. However, shortly after, accounts of additional shootings that later proved to be unfounded spread through the other three terminals, creating mass panic. As a person who was at a restaurant in Terminal 3 describes it, “It was surreal. It was completely unbelievable, (...) it was absolutely every man for himself. It was total panic.”¹⁰ Panicked passengers proceeded to self-evacuate, creating a chaotic situation that resulted in between 30 and 40 people sustaining injuries, according to Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel.¹¹ An investigation about the shooting by the *Sun-Sentinel* concluded that “authorities failed to guide or inform terrified passengers about what was happening or when they would get help.” Passengers quoted in the story complained of not getting any information at all, saying “nobody knew anything”, and “nobody had any idea what they were doing”,

and “there was nobody there to direct us.”¹² Passenger service workers felt just as helpless as it took several more hours for law enforcement to take back control of the airport.

Most passenger service workers reported being asked by passengers in various levels of panic about what was happening and what they needed to do.¹³ The passenger service workers in uniform were thought, by the traveling public, to be well-informed airport employees with up-to-date information. In moments of uncertainty, passengers would understandably expect airport employees in uniform to be able to provide information and guidance on security and evacuation procedures. Sadly, workers reported frustration at not being able to assist passengers with their queries, as they themselves did not know what was happening and what to do.¹⁴

A review of the permits under which passenger service providers operate at FLL shows that contractors are not required to provide emergency response or evacuation training to their employees,¹⁵ or even ensure that they receive that kind of training from other sources.

Even if those requirements existed, enforcing them and monitoring passenger service providers would be a challenging task for County Administrators because of the large amount of contractors operating at FLL¹⁶ and the fact that their numbers are growing.¹⁷ Furthermore, there are no policy requirements in Broward County Code for minimum qualifications that companies must meet to obtain a permit.¹⁸ While BCAD does require contractors to submit an application and certain documents in order to be able to enter into an Airline Service Provider Agreement, there are no requirements for a specific amount of experience and a comprehensive review of the applicant contractor’s history and responsibility.¹⁹ In addition, the application process is not conducted openly. Stronger qualification requirements and a more comprehensive and transparent review of applications could help ensure that passenger service contractors at FLL have the appropriate experience and quality to operate at a first-class airport.

Beyond the lack of training requirements and the excessive number of passenger service providers at FLL, the major issue impacting safety and security at the airport is the unstable work force caused by the persistently low wages and poor benefits received by passenger service workers. Even as these workers are now covered by the County’s living wage rates, thanks to a policy adopted in late 2015 by the Broward County Commission, the workers’ compensation is still too low. Due mostly to the Living Wage Ordinance indexing method, outlined by County Code, the living wage rates have fallen behind their intended goals. In addition, because of high inflation in the health insurance market over the last decade, the portion of the living wage meant for health insurance is currently inadequate.

Poor wages and benefits are generally associated with high turnover rates and lack of job ownership. In addition, workers receiving low wages and benefits and few hours tend to work multiple jobs, which can increase levels of stress and decrease performance and alertness.

BEST PRACTICES

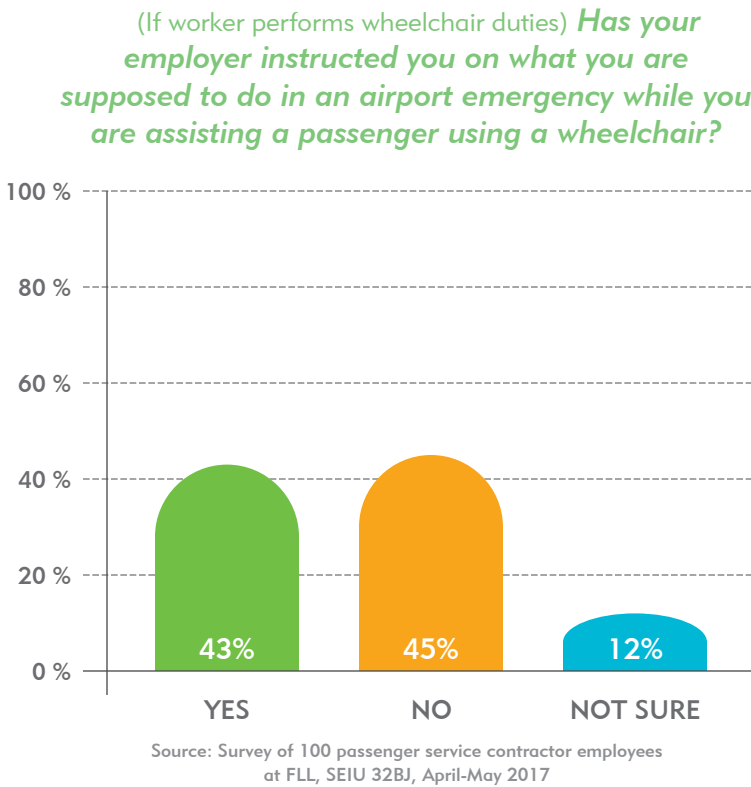
To address these problems, Broward County can look towards existing policies at other airports of comparable size. Specifically, the following existing programs offer best practices that FLL can use:

→ **San Francisco International Airport Quality Standards Program (QSP):** Established in 1999 with the goal of enhancing safety and security at the airport, the QSP established training, equipment and compensation and benefits standards for employees of service providers whose jobs impact safety and security at the airport.²⁰

→ **Los Angeles World Airports Certified Service Provider Program (CSPP):** The CSPP was adopted in 2010 with the goals of identifying and establishing minimum equipment and training standards that airline contractors would be required to meet to operate at Los Angeles International Airport. The goals of the CSPP also included establishing an enforcement program with penalties and defining a decertification process.²¹

→ **Miami International Airport General Aeronautical Service Provider (GASP):** The GASP system has been utilized since 1992 to limit the number of passenger service providers, and at the time of its inception, airport officials stated that the goal was to address existing safety, security and congestion concerns on the airside operations area at the airport, as well as the limitation on ramp storage space for vehicles and equipment, and of ticket counter and office space in the terminal building.²²

In the sections below, we will take a detailed look at the issues that SEIU Local 32BJ believes should be addressed in order to help empower employees of passenger service contractors to make FLL a safer airport.



ADDRESSING SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EVACUATION TRAINING

During SEIU Local 32BJ’s interviews and surveys with passenger service contractor employees from various contractors at FLL, the primary issue identified as a problem was that they did not feel prepared to assist or provide guidance to passengers and to help airport authorities regain control of the situation. Some workers explained with frustration that the training they had received from their employer was not enough to prepare them for an emergency like this.²³ In addition, workers interviewed reported that they would benefit from participating in emergency drills at the airport.²⁴

Wheelchair attendants who regularly assist elderly or disabled passengers expressed that they do not know what they are supposed to do with a passenger on a wheelchair if there was an emergency situation.²⁵ A worker interviewed by SEIU Local 32BJ explained how, in a previous emergency at FLL, he and his co-workers were assisting passengers in wheelchairs, and were stuck in the second floor with them because the elevators had been disabled. Neither he nor his co-workers knew what they were supposed to do in that situation so they just stayed there with their passengers until the elevators became available.²⁶

In addition, most passenger service workers interviewed explained that they did not have effective communication with their employers or other airport authorities during the January 6th emergency. Most workers reported not having radios or any other communication devices beyond their own personal phones.²⁷ Also, workers expressed concern that their employer did not even call them during the emergency or in the days after to check if they were okay.²⁸

A review of Broward County Code and the permits under which passenger service contractors operate at FLL indicates that there are no current requirements for them to provide emergency response or evacuation training to their frontline employees.²⁹

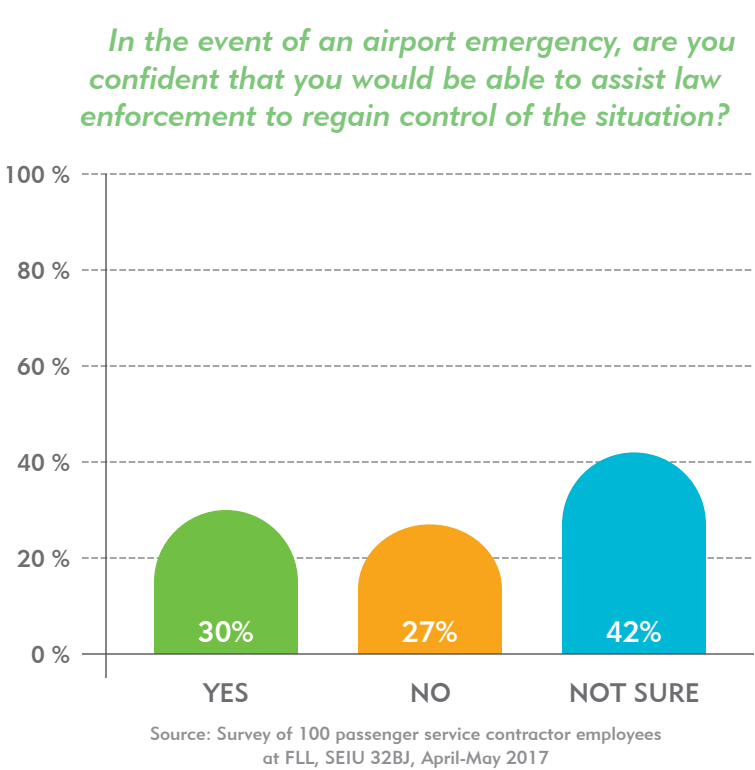
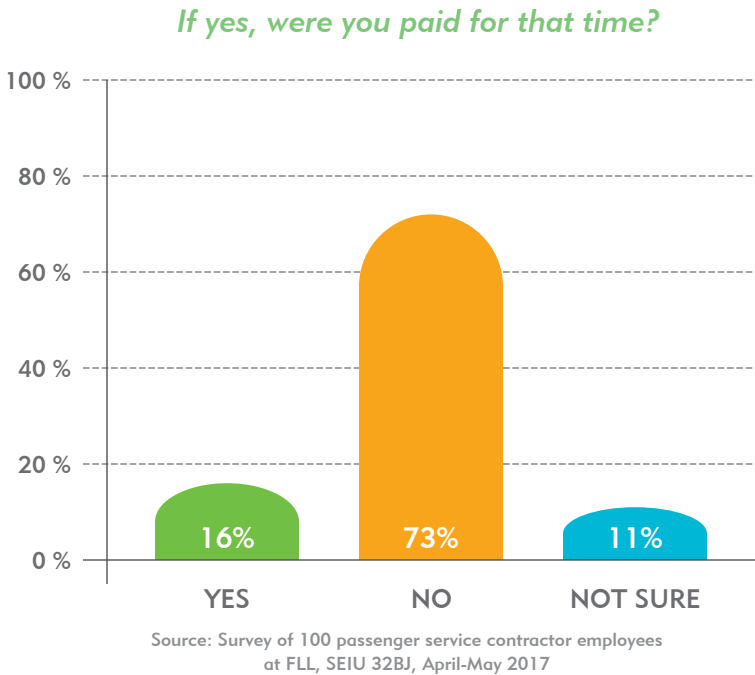
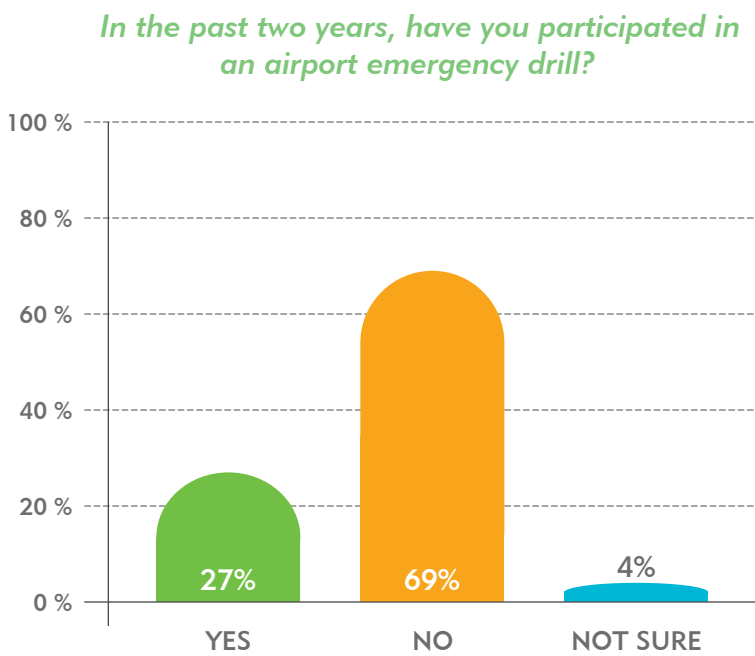
Thus, the decision of whether to provide emergency response and evacuation training to passenger service employees is left to either the contractor itself or airline clients, the latter of which can contractually require minimum standards of training. However, without a uniform training standard imposed by Broward County on all FLL contractors, those with higher standards in screening and training of employees would be at a competitive disadvantage against contractors with lower standards.

Best practices in training requirements

The Los Angeles World Airports CSPP has extensive training requirements. Certified Providers personnel are not only required to be thoroughly trained in their job duties, but also in airport emergency preparedness, evacuation and first aid procedures. Other required training components include instruction on operating any equipment that will be utilized, airport rules and regulations, and safety and security including guidelines from the TSA, Customs and Border Protection and LAWA Airport Police. Training syllabi, as well as training completion records and a list of all employees on payroll must be provided to LAWA, the airport operator, by certified providers on an annual basis.³⁰

Similarly, the San Francisco International Airport QSP requires that covered employers provide an initial training program and a recurrent training to their employees, and it also includes record retention requirements. QSP compliant training programs must include emergency preparedness and evacuation procedures, among other items.³¹

At Miami International Airport, through the GASP system, passenger service contractors are also required to ensure that their employees receive security, safety and any other training that the Miami-Dade Aviation Department or federal agencies may require.³² In addition, providers are also required to provide training to their employees on customer service and quality control.³³



CONTRACTOR PERMITTING AND SCREENING

An excessive amount of passenger service contractors

A public records request showed that as of March 2017, 51 companies had a current Airline Service Provider Agreement at FLL. Those agreements are required to operate as an airline contractor at FLL and they include a permit authorizing each company to provide specific services to their clients. A review of the 51 permits shows that 40 companies are exclusively authorized to provide what we are referring to collectively as “passenger services.”

The enormous number of permitted passenger services contractors at FLL is problematic

for several reasons. First, it encourages instability in the workforce. Employees of a contractor with only one or a few small contracts might not have access to full-time hours, which could lead to job dissatisfaction and incentivize workers to leave the job or seek additional employment.

If FLL had fewer passenger service providers, their employees would probably have access to more hours and be more likely to have full-time jobs. Generally, workers with full-time jobs are more likely to be satisfied with their work and stay with their employer and less likely to seek second or third jobs, allowing them to be more alert and focused in the performance of their duties while utilizing the training they receive for their positions in a more effective manner.

Secondly, the large amount of passenger service contractors at FLL makes the responsibility of regulating them considerably difficult. Even if passenger service contractors were required to provide emergency response and evacuation training and to establish a system to communicate with employees during an airport emergency, enforcing those requirements and keeping track of those contractors would be challenging.

To illustrate the difficulties enforcing requirements on a large amount of contractors and the inefficiencies of doing so for companies with very small numbers of workers, we can look at each category and the amount of security badges that contractors currently have.³⁴

➔ For “Passenger Service for Air Carriers”, 14 airline service providers are authorized to provide these services, with the largest provider having 239 badges, but also including nine providers with fewer than 100 badges, including six with 30 or less.

➔ Among the 13 providers authorized to provide “Ground Handling and Ramp Services for Air Carriers”, only three have more than 76 badges, and eight of them have fewer than 40 badges.

➔ Of the 13 contractors authorized to provide “Aircraft Cleaning for Air Carriers”, eight have fewer than 100 badges, and five have 30 or less.

➔ 11 contractors are authorized to provide “Porter Service for Air Carriers”, which includes wheelchair attendants, but only three of them have more than 100 badges, and five have less than 50 badges.

The need for stronger screening criteria

The disproportionate amount of passenger service contractors at FLL could also be a sign of the need for stronger screening criteria. Airline service providers at FLL are currently not required to meet with any qualification requirements by County Code, prior to being issued a permit to operate at the airport. BCAD does require prospective contractors to submit an application with a copy of their agreement with an airline or lessee, a current financial statement, a list of corporate officers and three credit references, among other requirements.³⁵ However, the application does not describe any requirements to have a specific amount of experience or indicate that BCAD will review past regulatory issues or the qualifications of management personnel.



Thus, some current passenger service contractors operating at FLL have questionable records, especially in their labor practices and their relationship with employees. In the course of helping workers at FLL organize and form a union, SEIU Local 32BJ has encountered airline service contractors like Eulen America, the second largest passenger service provider at FLL.³⁶ Eulen America has seen its employees at FLL go on strike four times in a span of just over a year to protest working conditions, has been the subject of multiple claims and lawsuits for unpaid wages that it settled without admitting any wrongdoing, and has been cited by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for violations of federal workplace health and safety standards. In 2016, Eulen employees at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport also went on strike. Another company among the ten largest passenger service providers at FLL with a questionable record is Direct Airline Services, also the subject of at least four recent lawsuits for unpaid wages, three of which it settled despite denying any wrongdoing and one still pending.³⁷

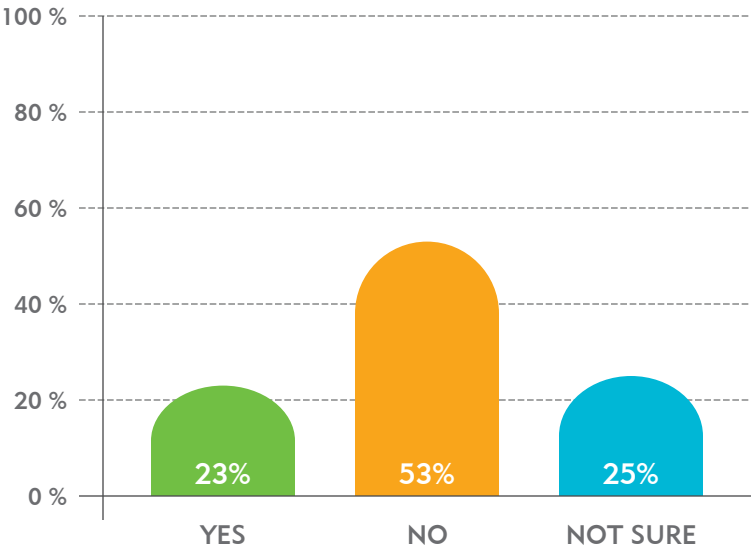
Best practices in passenger service contractor permitting and screening

At Miami International Airport (MIA), which is owned and operated by Miami-Dade County, only a limited amount of contractors have the right to provide certain services to airline clients at the airport, under a GASP permit. Those services include: ticket counter and operations services, passenger services, ramp services, porter assistance services, dispatching and communications services, and meteorological/navigation services.³⁸ Miami-Dade County has utilized this system since at least 1992, when it awarded the original five GASPs through a procurement process.³⁹ Though the number of GASPs awarded at any given time has at times fluctuated between four or six, it has mostly stayed at five. Today, only five contractors hold GASPs, which were awarded in 2015 for an initial period of five years, and with the potential of extending them for four additional years.^{40,41}

Through the GASP system, MIA has been able to establish minimum qualifications required from service providers to be eligible to be awarded a permit. Service providers have to submit a Qualification Statement and in it they shall demonstrate that they have provided the six required services at a Category X airport for at least three of the last five years, and they must attain certification in the International Air Transport Association’s Safety Audit of Ground Operations (ISAGO) program within 12 months of award of a permit, among other requirements. The Office of the County Attorney reviews Qualification Statements for Responsiveness, and then a Selection Committee of County and industry representatives reviews them for responsibility, defined as the capability of carrying out the work in a competent and effective manner. In making that decision, the Committee can investigate the management, operational experience, financial capability, reputation and business judgment of the companies vying for GASPs. Final determinations of responsibility are within the discretion of the Board of County Commissioners.⁴²

At Los Angeles International Airport, companies wishing to provide services regulated by the Certified Service Provider Program must meet certain criteria. The regulated services include baggage sorting and management, wheelchair services, ramp baggage handling, interior aircraft cleaning, security, into-plane-fueling, and others. Among other requirements, service providers aspiring to enter into a Certified Service Provider License Agreement (CSPLA) must demonstrate that they have had successful general operating experience in three of the last five years at a large hub airport. In addition, an airline or CSP client must confirm in writing the applicant’s capacity to perform the services they are being contracted to provide. Furthermore, applicants must prove access to adequate property and facilities to carry out the services. After the prospective service provider submits an application, LAWA determines whether it meets the minimum qualifications and completes the enrollment process, and it will issue a CSPLA. During the term of the agreement, the service provider must adhere to the requirements of its CSPLA. If the licensee fails to comply with any of the requirements of the agreement, LAWA can demand corrective action, and can impose penalties up to termination of the agreement.⁴³

Do you feel that your company has an effective communication system that would allow you to stay well informed during and after an emergency situation at work?



Source: Survey of 100 passenger service contractor employees at FLL, SEIU 32BJ, April-May 2017

In 2015, at McCarran International Airport (LAS) in Las Vegas, airport owner Clark County utilized an Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to select just three contractors⁴⁴ to provide comprehensive ground handling services to the international airlines operating at the airport, with the goal of enhancing the high standards of quality, safety and efficiency. The list of services to be provided by these contractors includes a wide range of ground handling services, including aircraft cleaning, baggage handling, skycap services, janitorial services, passenger check-in and ramp handling. In order to meet the qualification requirements, providers needed to have had at the time a minimum of three continuous years of experience within the past five years as a Comprehensive Aviation Support Services Provider for international airlines. After proposers submitted Statements of Qualifications in response to the RFQ, the process called for

a review based on responsiveness, qualifications and experience, local management team, customer service plans, employee benefit package and the respondent’s financial capability. Following the review, the analysis of the Statements of Qualifications was sent to the Clark County Board of County Commissioners, so it could approve the selection of the three providers who ultimately entered into Comprehensive Aviation Support Services Provider Agreements, each with a term of 10 years.⁴⁵

In a February 2017 article on industry website aviationpros.com, Christine Crews, the public information administrator at LAS stated about the program established through the RFQ:⁴⁶

“The third-party ground handlers here have a full-time staff that services multiple airlines. (...) If you offer someone a position in which they may only be working a few hours a day for the three days a week that an international carrier has service in and out of Las Vegas, it makes it really hard to retain those employees. Most people are looking for full-time work and a living wage.”

Crews also added that the setup adopted by LAS provided less turnover, a better workforce and sustainability all around.

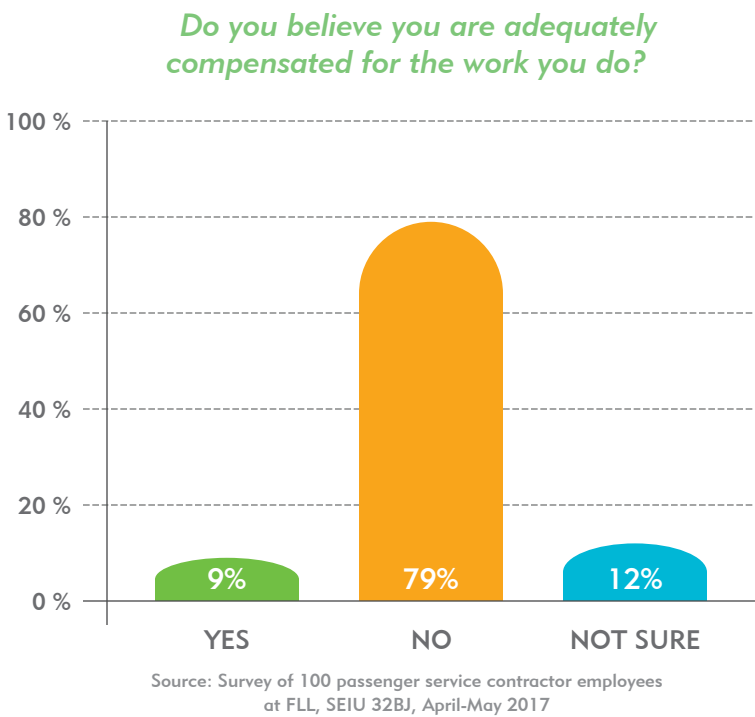
THE BROWARD COUNTY LIVING WAGE RATE HAS
FALLEN BEHIND ITS ORIGINAL INTENT

Providing family-sustaining jobs is a vital part of empowering passenger service workers to help make the airport safer. There is a strong body of research linking low wages with high employee turnover and poor performance, especially regarding security.⁴⁷ This relationship was officially understood before the 9/11 attacks, when the Government Accountability Office identified rapid turnover linked to low wages as a key factor reducing the effectiveness of security screeners contracted out by airlines.⁴⁸

This point was made even more forcefully by the bi-partisan 9/11 Commission, which found that one potential hijacker was turned back as he tried to enter the United States by an immigration inspector who relied on intuitive experience to ask questions. The Commission noted “the importance of letting experienced gate agents or security screeners ask questions and use their judgment... [as]any effective system has to grant some scope... to the instincts and discretion of well-trained human beings.”⁴⁹

Airport jobs are especially critical because each and every one of them has direct responsibility for much of the services and equipment that maintain the integrity of the airport facility and operations.

The Broward County Commission took a major step to address problems in the out-sourced passenger services industry at FLL when it voted in October 2015 to extend its Living Wage Ordinance requirements to airline



service providers at FLL, which previously only applied to County employees and contractors.⁵⁰ Prior to that, passenger service workers were the only significant workforce at the airport that received poverty wages and benefits, being paid rates that were at or just slightly above the Florida minimum wages, which in 2015 were \$5.03 for tipped employees and \$8.05 for non-tipped employees.⁵¹ A report exploring the potential impact of expanding the Living Wage to FLL airline contractors by the Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy at Florida International University found that average wages prior to the ordinance amendment were \$8.35 per hour.⁵² On January 1st, 2016, airline service contractor employees began receiving a living wage, which at the time was set at \$11.84 for workers offered health insurance, and \$13.38 for those who were not.⁵³ The current living wage rates are \$12.03 and \$13.59 respectively.⁵⁴

The original goal of the Living Wage Ordinance, when the Broward County Board of County Commissioners enacted it in 2002, was to “promote the creation of full-time permanent jobs that allow citizens to support themselves and their families with dignity while also benefiting the local economy.”⁵⁵

However, mostly because of flawed indexing methods, the Living Wage rates have not kept up with inflation and are now failing to fulfill their original mission.

The Base Living Wage rate

When the Broward County Living Wage Ordinance was originally enacted in 2002, the rate for workers who receive health insurance was set at 110% of the Federal poverty line for a family of four. The formula resulted in a base wage rate of \$9.57, applicable for fiscal year 2003.⁵⁶ Today, the Living Wage base rate for workers with health insurance is \$12.03,⁵⁷ or \$25,022 per year, barely above the 2017 poverty line for a family of four, \$24,600⁵⁸. To accomplish its original intent, the Broward County Living Wage rate should be set at the rate that amounts to 110% of the 2017 federal poverty line for a family of four, \$27,060 per year, or \$13.01 per hour.

Indexing of the Living Wage rate

The main reason why Living Wage rates in Broward County have fallen behind the rates required to fulfill their original mission, is that the indexing method is flawed.

The indexing section of the original Living Wage Ordinance required annually adjusting the Living Wage rate using inflation rates for the Miami – Fort Lauderdale area. However, in 2008 in the midst of the recession, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners amended the indexing section to add caps for increases. These caps included a 3% rate, and the rate of increases provided to unrepresented Broward County employees.⁵⁹

The rationale for capping living wage increases by the increases received by unrepresented County workers is unsound, since those employees receive health care plans whose increasing costs are covered, at least in part, by Broward County. These workers also generally receive other benefits, like paid time off, that are not required by the Living Wage ordinance.

The ordinance amendment had the effect of severely limiting living wage increases for future years. While in the first four years of existence of the Living Wage, before the 2008 amendment, the Living Wage rate had increased by an average of 3.7%, in the nine years since the amendment it has increased by an average of just 0.9%, including four years without an increase at all (0%).⁶⁰

Health Differential rate

The Living Wage Ordinance also establishes that a certain amount be paid towards the provision of health benefits (the “health differential”). The original amount in 2002 was set at \$1.25 per hour,⁶¹ when the average premium for an employer-sponsored single health plan was \$257 per month.⁶²

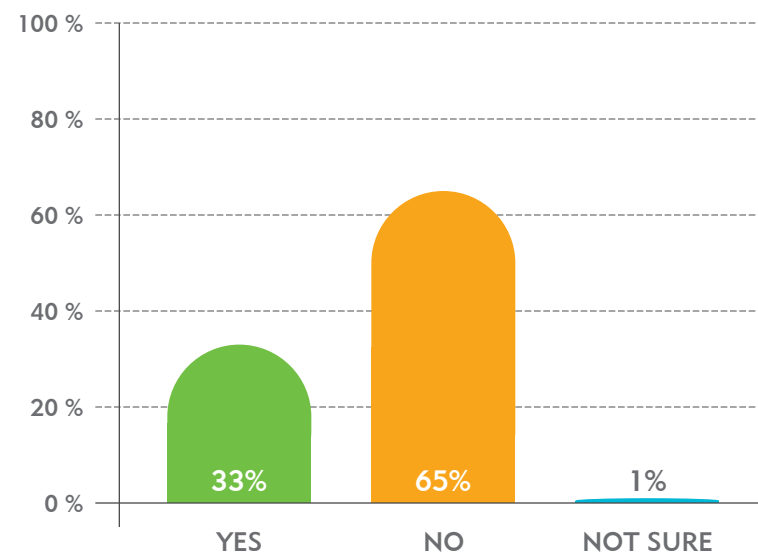
Today, the health differential has increased only to \$1.56 per hour (a 25% increase since 2002), while monthly premium costs have ballooned to \$536⁶³ per month - a 109% increase (using the 2016 figure). Thus, in order to provide enough to cover current average monthly individual premium costs, the Broward County health differential would need to be increased to \$3.09 per hour.⁶⁴

Indexing of the Health Differential rate

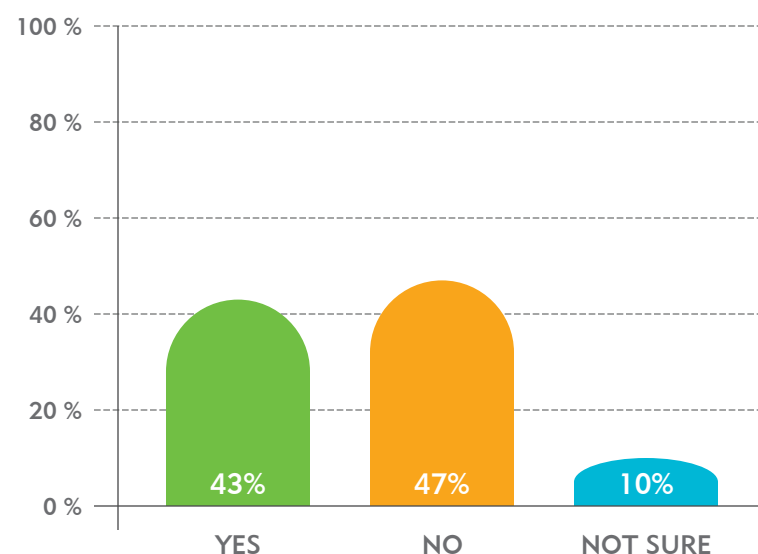
As previously stated, when originally enacted, the Living Wage Ordinance established that both the Living Wage rate and the Health differential would increase annually by the rate of inflation in the Miami - Fort Lauderdale area. However, that original formula proved ineffective because healthcare premium increases have been significantly higher than general inflation rates, leaving the health differential behind at progressively more inadequate rates. Furthermore, the caps introduced to the indexing formula in 2008, further eroded the ability of the health differential to cover health insurance premiums.

To address that, Broward County can index its Health differential to a more adequate measure, such as the rate of inflation for medical care costs for the Miami-Fort Lauderdale area. When the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners addressed the shortcomings of its own Living Wage Ordinance in April 2016, this was one of the changes effected.⁶⁵

Other than the training you received when getting or renewing your badge, have you received training from your employer about your role and procedures for emergency situations?



If yes, were you paid for that time?



Source: Survey of 100 passenger service contractor employees at FLL, SEIU 32BJ, April-May 2017



Best practices in Living Wages

The three airports whose policies are being used as models that FLL can look at to determine how to address the problems outlined in this report have all established higher minimum wages for their passenger service workers, understanding the importance that these workers have on safety and security.

The base rate of Miami-Dade County’s Living Wage Ordinance has done a much better job of keeping up with inflation, and is now set at \$12.63 per hour.⁶⁶ That is because the ordinance, similarly to Broward County, provides for indexing the Living Wage rate to inflation, but it does not cap those increases like Broward County does. In April 2015, faced with the problem of its own ordinance’s health differential not being able to fund even average health insurance plans, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners voted to increase that rate from \$1.83 to \$2.89 per hour. Furthermore, to avoid that problem recurring in the future, the Commission also voted to index the health differential to a more appropriate rate that accounts for inflation in the health insurance market, the annual change in the Consumer Price Index for Medical Care for Miami-Fort Lauderdale.⁶⁷

At Los Angeles International Airport, certified passenger service contractors are required to comply with the City of Los Angeles Living Wage Ordinance, which sets minimum wages for airport employees of \$11.68 per hour with health benefits and \$16.73 without them, providing for a health differential of \$5.05 per hour. On July 1st 2017, those rates will be adjusted to \$12.08 with health benefits and \$17.26 without them, resulting in a health differential of \$5.18 per hour. Adjustments to Living Wage rates correspond to adjustments made to benefits paid to members of the Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System. Besides setting minimum wages, the City of Los Angeles Living Wage Ordinance also establishes that covered employees be provided with 12 paid days off per year and 10 unpaid days off.⁶⁸

The San Francisco Quality Standards Program requires employers to provide employees engaged in the services covered under the program with minimum compensation and benefits. The QSP rate is established as \$0.50 above the current San Francisco Minimum Compensation Ordinance (MCO) rate. Since the MCO rate is currently \$13.64,⁶⁹ the current QSP minimum rate is \$14.14. The MCO rate is subject to updates every year based on CPI increases. In addition, employers are required to provide their employees with 12 paid days off and 10 unpaid days off. Covered employers are also required to comply with the San Francisco Health Care Accountability Ordinance (HCAO) minimum health coverage standards. The HCAO requires employers to offer health plan benefits to covered employees, to make payments to the City for use by the Department of Health or, under limited circumstances, to make payments directly to their employees. For employers complying with the HCAO by making payments to the City and County of San Francisco, the rate is \$4.65 per hour, capped at \$186 per week.⁷⁰



RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the problems outlined in this report, and help empower passenger service workers at FLL to be “force-multipliers” to the current security apparatus and help make the airport safer, SEIU Local 32BJ recommends that Broward County adopt the policy recommendations below.

ESTABLISH MANDATORY TRAINING TO PREPARE WORKERS FOR AIRPORT EMERGENCIES

All passenger service contractors should be required to ensure that all of their employees participate in a comprehensive training program. All current and newly hired personnel should receive an initial training of at least 40 hours and then should participate in annual refresher trainings of at least eight hours.

Training topics should not only include rules and regulations of the airport and of the appropriate security agencies, but also security awareness, protocols and procedures for airport emergencies, airport emergency communication systems, and evacuation routes and procedures. In addition, passenger service workers whose jobs require them to assist elderly and disabled passengers should additionally receive training on how to assist them and ensure their safety during airport emergencies. Training shall be provided by certified trainers with minimum qualifications previously approved by BCAD.

Passenger service contractors should also be required to ensure that their employees participate in periodic emergency drills to prepare them for airport emergencies.

In addition, passenger service contractors should be required to maintain records of their employees’ completion of the training program and their participation in emergency drills. Furthermore, to ensure full participation, when passenger service workers attend mandatory training sessions and required emergency drills, they should be paid their regular rate of pay for that time.

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PASSENGER SERVICE CONTRACTORS AND LIMIT THEIR NUMBERS

Passenger service contractors wishing to operate at FLL should be required to demonstrate that they are responsible and capable of performing the services they provide at a high standard. To accomplish that, they should be required to demonstrate having a specific amount of experience at an airport that is comparable to FLL. In addition, providers should be required to submit references from clients at FLL or at other comparable airports. Furthermore, the decision of whether to award a permit to a provider should be made more transparent and open to public input.

To stabilize the workforce by promoting full-time jobs, ensure that only the most qualified passenger service contractors are allowed to operate at FLL, and allow for training requirements and any other permit stipulations to be enforced effectively, the number of passenger service providers should be periodically scrutinized, and if necessary limited. Setting limits could also promote safety in the ramp area and also relieve the pressure on leasable terminal space at the airport.

Finally, BCAD or any other agency responsible for enforcing training and permit requirements should be given stronger audit and enforcement powers over permittees. Contractors that do not meet or violate permit stipulations or any County law should be provided an opportunity to cure, and then be subjected to fines, suspension, and even termination of their permits.

STABILIZE THE WORKFORCE AND REDUCE TURNOVER BY FIXING THE LIVING WAGE ORDINANCE

To reduce turnover and help make passenger service jobs better, the Broward County Commission should ensure that passenger service workers at FLL receive a living wage set at a level where it can at least meet its original purpose.

Thus, the base rate of the Living Wage should be increased from \$12.03 to at least \$13.01, which is the rate that would provide income for a full-time worker of 110 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four. The health differential of the Living Wage rate should also be adjusted, from \$1.56 to \$3.09, so that it can at least cover the average cost of an employer-provided individual health insurance plan.

Finally, to ensure that the Living Wage rates are able to keep up with inflation and continue accomplishing their original purpose, the indexing method should be fixed. The base Living Wage rate should continue being indexed to the rate of inflation for the Miami - Fort Lauderdale area, but the indexing caps placed during the recession in 2008 should be removed. In addition, to ensure that the health differential can continue funding at least the average cost of an individual plan, the rate should be pegged to an index that better reflects inflation in the health insurance market. The most appropriate index, the one that the Miami-Dade County Living Wage ordinance utilizes, is inflation for Medical Care in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale area.⁷¹



CONCLUSION

Passenger service workers are a very important component of the airports safety and security system given their sheer numbers and their close contact with passengers and other airport workers. Thus, the policies proposed by SEIU Local 32BJ, of establishing a mandatory training program, improving the quality and periodically scrutinizing the number of passenger service contractors operating at the airport, and ensuring that passenger service workers receive a real living wage, would have an exponentially beneficial effect on safety and security at FLL by ensuring that the workforce is stabilized and properly trained.

The airline industry’s relentless pursuit for lower costs is not an excuse to allow contracting practices to undermine safety and security at FLL. Globally, the airline industry has been making record profits, with an estimated \$35.6 billion in earnings in 2016. In the same period, the most successful group of airlines were North American carriers, whose profits were estimated at over \$20 billion.⁷² FLL is a key airport for several domestic and international airlines, so investing in improving safety and security for all stakeholders should be a key to maintaining and building on this status.

Collectively, the policies proposed by SEIU Local 32BJ would establish a framework to set, support and build on minimum standards in a workforce that is key to protecting critical infrastructure and one of the biggest economic engines of the region. These policies could also provide a model for addressing safety and security at other large hub airports around the nation.

ENDNOTES

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2 FLL Security badge data and Airline Service Provider Agreements as of March 2017.

3 Statements and interviews of FLL passenger service workers.

4 Statements and interviews of FLL passenger service workers.

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