

Supporting ground support

Enhancing the voice of the aviation ground support industry by Mike Doane, Sales Director, Douglas Equipment.



Several years have passed since companies providing equipment and services to the aviation ground support industry realised the need for a strong and respected industry body to represent their interests. Representation was needed on a global scale to stand alongside associations representing other sectors of the aviation market, such as IATA, the International Aviation Handlers Association (IAHA) and the Airports Council International (ACI). This led to the formation of IAGSA – the International Aviation Ground Support Association.

Until that point in time, companies providing equipment and services to the ground support sector, a vital and important component of the aviation industry, had no co-ordinated voice to influence the industry on their behalf. They had no means of promoting their interests and concerns on a variety of issues, including promotional requirements, events and legislation. Prior to the creation of IAGSA, there was no formal means to liaise with associations representing the interests of other aviation industry sectors. Now, several years on, IAGSA is growing in status, strength and importance in representing its members – and the ground support community in general.

IAGSA, with a professional management team based in Falls Church, Virginia, takes direction from a Board of Directors elected from member companies and a growing membership comprising international and national companies providing a wide variety of equipment, goods and services to the ground support industry. IAGSA is well-placed to continue to grow and provide a strong voice on issues affecting its members and the industry at large. IAGSA provides a co-ordinated voice by representing its members' views to airlines, ground handling companies and airport authorities, as well as their representative bodies and government authorities worldwide.

With a well-established website, a major milestone in the association's development was reached in 2008. Recognising the need for a focused ground support exhibition run by the industry for the industry, the IAGSA membership decided to partner with Mack Brooks Exhibitions to organise, co-ordinate and manage a ground support industry exhibition in Las Vegas. This resulted in the birth of Airport Expo 2008 at the prestigious Mandalay Bay Exhibition and Convention Center in May 2008. With the busy Las Vegas McCarran International as a backdrop providing the "airport atmosphere," the venue offered companies the

option of exhibiting indoors or outdoors. In the outdoor area, many exhibitors took advantage of the facilities provided for live demonstrations of their equipment.

For an initial event, the show met, and in many cases exceeded, expectations. Airport Expo 2008 brought together the ground support industry community at a focused event for the industry, where visitors could view ground equipment hardware in action. The Expo provided a friendly but business-like atmosphere, for which the ground support industry is well known. Keen for the show to succeed, exhibitors had invested in the event. Visitors were able to see many types of ground support equipment in action, and the Expo was deemed a great success by both visitors and exhibitors.

Following on from the success of Airport Expo 2008, it is now IAGSA's intention, in co-operation with Mack Brooks Exhibitions, to run this event on a bi-annual basis. It will be scheduled in the alternate years to the ground support industries' premier event, InterAirport Europe, which is held every other year in Munich, Germany. This will provide the aviation ground support industry with two ground support industry focused events in alternate years in strategic locations. Both events will be easily accessed from all parts of the world and supported by many national trade associations, enabling exhibitors to plan ahead and to invest in their participation by exhibiting and demonstrating their equipment to a greater extent. The end result will be shows that are more beneficial and meaningful for the visitor, the exhibitor and the industry in general.

Airport Expo 2010 will again be held in Las Vegas at the Mandalay Bay Exhibition and Convention Center and thereafter every two years. As with Airport Expo 2008, IAGSA members will be entitled to attractive discounts on their stand space if booked by the IAGSA membership booking deadline.

IAGSA is now embarking on an international recruitment drive to encourage more companies selling equipment and services to the ground support equipment industry to join its membership. Expanded participation in IAGSA management and events will give the association an even stronger voice in representing its members' interests alongside those of the other well-established industry bodies such as IATA, IAHA and ACI.

Full information on IAGSA membership is available at www.iagsa.org