

ground handling INTERNATIONAL

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GHI EVENTS

- **9th GHI Safety Conference**, TRYP Barcelona Apolo Hotel, 8-9 September 2020
- **6th Americas GHI Conference**, Sheraton Buenos Aires Hotel & Convention Centre, 6-8 October 2020
- **22nd Annual GHI Conference**, Bella Center, Copenhagen, 30 November -3 December 2020
- **6th African GHI Conference**, Century City Convention Centre, Cape Town, 26-27 January 2021
- **14th Asian GHI conference**, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore, 22-24 March 2021



QUICK OFF THE MARK

National Aviation Services operative Amos Mutungi won the Ramp Safety prize at the *GHI* Pride of Ground Handling Awards 2019 for his life-saving actions. The Deputy Editor sought his thoughts on the win.

Mutungi was awarded *GHI*'s annual ramp safety accolade last November for his quick thinking and preventative action when fire broke out on the ramp at Entebbe International airport in Uganda. In March 2019, Mutungi was offloading pallets from the hold of an MD-11 carrying fresh banknotes for the Bank of Uganda when he spotted a fire that had erupted on the right-hand side of the landing gear. He immediately picked up a fire extinguisher and began putting out the blaze, shouting "fire" to draw the attention of colleagues, who then alerted the fire department. Using two extinguishers, he was able to put out the fire moments before the fire department arrived and mitigated any further danger.

In this incident, Mutungi's training and quick thinking prevented huge losses in terms of life, property and business, protecting customers and staff of the airport, airline and handler. Between the cost of aircraft damage and the value of

the banknotes inside, millions of dollars were saved, with significant additional savings made in protecting the ground support equipment stationed within range of the fire. Most importantly, the 14 people involved in handling the aircraft that day were saved from injury – or worse. It was estimated that injuries to personnel could have resulted in 480 work hours lost.

For his efforts, Mutungi was deemed wholly deserving of the Ramp Safety Award by a panel of industry judges.

"I have earned a lot of respect from colleagues"

Amos Mutungi

Well-earned recognition

Mutungi's efforts were formally appreciated by officials from the airline in question as well as the Civil Aviation Authority. NAS management duly recognised his actions and commended him for the glowing example he has set for his colleagues, through the rapid application of his training and the company safety standards.

"By taking personal ownership to avert such a huge disaster, he has demonstrated to his colleagues how we are all responsible for different aspects of operations, even if it is not our job. Safety is a top priority for all," NAS commented when they nominated him for the award.

Says Cisse Abdoulaye, Group Chief Operations Office – Ground Handling and Cargo Services, "We are extremely pleased that Amos was recognised for the Ramp Safety Award at *GHI*'s Pride of Ground Handling Awards 2019. He has truly demonstrated NAS' high standards in operational safety emerging from sound



experience and in-depth training.”

Mutungi explains what winning the award means to him. “It is a life achievement, as it has given me courage and motivation to continue working.” Indeed, he is now considered somewhat famous among his colleagues, he explains. “I have earned a lot of respect from colleagues; some people now call me “International Man” and my family are proud to be recognised internationally.”

He recalls his thoughts at the time of the incident on the day in question. “Because we were trained on safety and firefighting, as soon as I saw the flames, I rushed to pick up a fire extinguisher because I realised if the fire erupted, it would have a disastrous impact on the airline, the airport as a whole and the people.” The repercussions of this incident have lasted well beyond the day itself, of course, and Mutungi reports learning a great deal from the experience. “It taught me to handle issues with urgency and speed because any slight delay can result in a major disaster. I have become more vigilant and [understand that] a timely response to whatever we do is important. I have also realised that whatever we are trained for is for a purpose and it’s good to apply the skills when required.”



“... you need to strictly follow standard operating procedures at all times”

Amos Mutungi

A career – and a passion

It was his passion for aviation that led Mutungi to join NAS, where he has worked for more than seven years. He explains why he loves his work: “I have obtained good training, acquired enough skills and have the required experience and expertise. I enjoy working around aircraft and on the ramp. Ground handling is

about serving the travelling public, which is something I also enjoy.

“My favourite part of my job is being airside and operating the ramp equipment during flight operations with zero incidents,” he continues. “It also makes me happy to be leading a team of people who have the required knowledge and skills.”

Mutungi offers guidance to anyone considering a career in ground handling. “Ground handling is one of the key requirements in airline and airport operations. It requires good time management skills as well as a strong responsibility for the safety of passengers, aircraft and entire airport, which requires patience and an attention to detail. Discipline is also of the utmost importance as you need to strictly follow standard operating procedures at all times,” he advises.

If he wasn’t in this line of work, Mutungi believes he may have followed agricultural pursuits. “By profession, I studied Business Management so I would be somewhere practising business and farming,” he suggests. As for the rest of his career, he has no plans to deviate away from the airport, however. “NAS offers a good opportunity for career growth and development through on-the-job experience as well as training. I am now keen to train and share my knowledge with my team and instil a strong sense of safety and personal ownership in them,” he enthuses. **ghi**

Mutungi (above) was on the ramp at Entebbe airport at the time of the fire

