

CHICAGO EXECUTIVE AIRPORT

If you've ever driven past Chicago Executive Airport (CEA) and noticed the "ponds" near the runways after rainfall, you might've wondered what they're for. Those aren't just puddles; they're part of CEA's cutting-edge **stormwater management system**.

And here's the surprising part: the same engineering that keeps planes safe and runways clear also protects the surrounding area from flooding.

So, how'd this all come to be?

Back in the mid-80s, Prospect Heights and Wheeling took on the task of transforming Palwaukee Airport. One of the most pressing challenges we faced was addressing the flooding caused by the Des Plaines River. Heavy rainfall led to runways underwater, grounded planes, and risked increased damage to surrounding neighborhoods.

To benefit the area and protect CEA's operations:

We moved a whole drainage ditch

Buffalo Creek used to run right through the airport. Engineers helped reroute and widen it, so water is safely redirected.

We turned parts of the airfield into smart stormwater storage

In plain English, that means some grassy areas now double as holding tanks for rainwater when storms hit. Think of it like a sponge for the airport.

We kept the runways dry and ready

Even during the record-breaking 2013 floods, when much of the area was underwater, CEA stayed open.

Today, the airport's stormwater system can hold over 198 acre-feet of water at any given time. That's equivalent to:



PROTECTING THE SKY & THE GROUND



By improving drainage, protecting the river, and planning ahead, we've created an airport that works with nature, rather than against it. CEA continues to lead by example in keeping friends and neighbors a key priority in projects and upgrades.