Director credits staff for airline award

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NEW IBERIA — Officials with the Federal Aviation Administration announced Monday that Acadiana Regional Airport has been named the 2002 Airport of the Year in Louisiana.

The FAA honored seven airports in the five states that make up the Southwest Region: Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

There are 77 airports in Louisiana. Seventy of them are categorized as general aviation, and the remaining seven are in the commercial aviation category. Acadiana Regional Airport is a general aviation airport.

"It kind of surprised me," said Airport Director Rock H. Lasserre Jr. "To think this airport was picked out of 70 as being the best is a great honor."

The Acadiana Regional Airport has a longer, wider runway than most commercial aviation airports in the state, according to Lasserre. Because of that, it has been able to receive some of the largest cargo aircraft in the world, including the U.S. Air Force's C-5A Galaxy transport and the Russian Ant-124.

Lasserre said the airport also has a hangar large enough to refurbish and paint an aircraft as large as a 747.

FAA Regional Director Naomi L. Saunders said the Acadiana Regional Airport was picked because of its maintenance program, use of airport improvement program resources and compliance with safety standards.

Lasserre said the airport has a staff of five people, including himself. Their work in managing Acadiana Regional and the nearby Lemaire Memorial Airport in Jeanerette is the reason the airport received the award, he said.

"This award belongs to them," he said. "If it weren't for those people, none of the things the airport was spotlighted for could have happened."

Other airports receiving the 2002 Airport of the Year award are the Fort Smith Regional Airport, Arkansas; the Santa Fe Municipal Airport, New Mexico; the Elk City Municipal Airport, Oklahoma; and the El Paso International Airport, Texas.