

# 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (SMS)



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This publication was prepared by the Safety Management International Collaboration Group (SM ICG). The primary purpose of the SM ICG is to promote a common understanding of SMS principles and requirements, and facilitate their application across the international aviation community.

## 1. What is a safety management system (SMS)?

A safety management system is a series of defined, organization-wide processes that provide for effective risk-based decision-making related to your daily business.

## 2. What does the SMS focus on?

SMS focuses on maximizing opportunities to continuously improve the overall safety of the aviation system.

## 3. What are the key processes of an SMS?

- ▶ **Hazard Identification** – a method for identifying hazards related to your organization;
- ▶ **Occurrence Reporting** – a process for the acquisition of safety data;
- ▶ **Risk Management** – a standard approach for assessing risks and for applying risk controls;
- ▶ **Performance Measurement** – management tools for analyzing whether the organization's safety goals are being achieved; and
- ▶ **Quality/Safety Assurance** – processes based on quality management principles that support continuous improvement of the organization's safety performance.

## 4. What are the roles and responsibilities within the SMS?

- ▶ The senior manager/accountable executive is accountable for establishing the SMS and allocating resources to support and maintain an effective SMS;

- ▶ Management is responsible for implementing, maintaining and adhering to SMS processes in their area; and
- ▶ Employees are responsible for identifying hazards and reporting them.

## 5. How will SMS benefit my organization?

- ▶ Provides for more informed decision-making;
- ▶ Improves safety by reducing risk of accidents;
- ▶ Provides for better resource allocation that will result in increased efficiencies and reduced costs;
- ▶ Strengthens corporate culture; and
- ▶ Demonstrates corporate due-diligence.

## 6. What key qualities are evident in organizations with an effective SMS?

- ▶ A top-down commitment from management and a personal commitment from all employees to achieve safety performance goals;
- ▶ A clear roadmap of what the SMS is and what it is supposed to accomplish;
- ▶ An established practice of open communication throughout the organization that is comprehensive and transparent, and where necessary, non-punitive; and
- ▶ An organizational culture that continuously strives to improve.

## 7. What SMS is not:

- ▶ Self-regulation / de-regulation;
- ▶ A stand alone department;

- ▶ A substitute for oversight; or
- ▶ An undue burden.

## 8. What SMS does:

- ▶ Builds on existing processes;
- ▶ Integrates with other management systems by tailoring a flexible regulatory framework to your organisation; and
- ▶ Demonstrates good business practice.

## 9. What's the difference between SMS and a flight safety program?

A safety management system is primarily proactive/predictive. It considers hazards and risks that impact the whole organization, as well as risk controls. A flight safety program is primarily reactive and typically focuses on only one part of the system - the airline operation.

## 10. What's the difference between SMS and quality management systems (QMS)?

- ▶ SMS focuses on the safety aspects of the organization.
- ▶ QMS focuses on the services and products of the organization.
- ▶ While QMS focuses on conformity, SMS focuses on hazards. Both non-conformities and hazards can impact safety.

Both systems enhance safety and are essential and complementary management tools. You cannot have an effective SMS without applying quality management principles.