



SMS Is Not a Cut and Paste Solution

WAYNE GOUVEIA | VP Commercial General Aviation
Air Transport Association of Canada | e-mail: wgouveia@atac.ca

Dynamic change is the one consistent challenge faced by aviation. A necessary component in managing the risks associated with this change is the introduction of Safety Management Systems (SMS). The implementation of SMS for all certificate holders in Canada is not a new concept, it has been ongoing since the turn of the 21st Century. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has recognized the critical nature of implementing SMS and has issued requirements to all 190 signatory states that SMS be adopted by international airports, air carriers and air traffic providers.

The heart of a properly designed SMS system is developing a culture with a more open reporting system which captures extensive information on hazards within an organization and provides the opportunity to evaluate the trends from the data gathering exercise. The corporate culture of an operator has to be conducive to more reporting and greater data gathering for analysis. An environment that recognizes safety concerns and mitigates them in future operational requirements will improve safety in a practical way. Management has a key role to play in supporting this culture, as management typically has control of the resources to make it happen.

Many operators have looked at implementation of an SMS and many have put off efforts to work towards building the system as they consider it to be too onerous and complicated. There is a business model which supports a significant return on the initial investment. The outcomes of an SMS system are typically new best practices, increased efficiency and less incidents and accidents all adding up to measurable cost savings to the operator.

ATAC, as a service to its members, has worked diligently on developing an SMS Tool Kit with the cooperation of Transport Canada headquarters in Ottawa. The Tool Kit is a practical program which provides the “how to” steps for an operator to develop their own specific program to meet the individual company needs. The Tool Kit is not a cookie cutter application or template which can be cut and pasted into a document to be put on the shelf. However, it is the road map or architecture to develop a scalable Safety Management System Program that is appropriate to the size and complexity of the organizations aligned with implementing an SMS program. In addition, ATAC has worked with Mike Doiron of Doiron Aviation Consulting to develop the Tool Kit and offers it “free of charge” to member companies. For companies requiring additional guidance in the development of their SMS, ATAC is also offering a 3 day workshop which provides more detail, and examples of the various components and elements common to Canadian SMS programs.

At a recent meeting of the new Transport Canada Associate Directors Operation (ADO), Dave White ADO, TC Prairie and Northern Region is quoted as saying “When you mentioned that the Tool Kit was “free” for your members and includes a practical workshop, you definitely had my attention. ATAC’s willingness to explore the possibility of marketing this product to interested parties was also of interest”. He goes on to say that “the involvement of the operator in developing their own program versus a straight manual purchase addresses some of the other concerns that are often identified during the validation process”.

The Air Transport Association of Canada does not stop there. ATAC will have a list of SMS experts who can meet with company safety officers and accountable executives at your base of operation to provide further insight into the various elements included in the Tool Kit and discussed in ATAC SMS workshops. Some of the areas that are of interest to companies developing SMS are Organiza-

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tional Risk/Accident Causation, Gap Analysis and the Coherence Matrix, Occurrence Investigation Process, Risk Management Process, Corrective Action Plan development, Emergency Response Planning and most importantly the need for a fully functioning Quality Assurance Program as a core component. ATAC is also doing its homework on developing a preferred vendor list of SMS software reporting systems which have met our experts rigorous requirements for a cost effective solution to report and record the data collected from an active reporting culture.

ATAC SMS resources are aimed at helping small to medium sized organizations which includes companies ranging from (406) flight training operators, through (703) charter operators up to, but not exclusive to (704) regional airline operators. ATAC is focused on attempting to define and fill the requirements for these organizations, especially those who do not have dedicated SMS staff. ATAC views SMS as a proactive and collaborative approach to aviation safety and requires emphasis on embracing a paradigm shift in the safety culture of Canadian operators. ATAC is committed to SMS and is here to help.