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

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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 betwen 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 complimentary management tools. You cannot have an effective SMS without applying quality management principles.

Safety Management Systems