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SMS – TOP TIPS

A number of operators' SMS certification dates have been extended out to 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19. As you approach your certification date the CAA's nine SMS specialists share some key and pithy advice.



Penny Stevenson

Keep your audit programme real. Gather up your SOPs and your hazard register, and go sit in a truck for a while, and watch what's actually happening 'out there'.

Do the processes and procedures you're watching actually match what you have on paper? Think about how they could be improved.

It's guaranteed you'll find hazards you hadn't thought about, and you'll have a better understanding of how it all really works.

In so many ways, it beats sitting behind a desk.

Simon Carter

Make your formal safety policy the same as your informal safety message to staff – short and to the point is best.

Look at your risk controls – are they really in place? Or just a set of ideas?

Have you included contacting the rescue coordination centre as an initial action in your emergency response plan for an overdue aircraft?

Charlotte Brogan

Make sure you *really* understand the SMS processes documented in your manual, especially if you've used an outside consultant to write that manual.

Take responsibility for those processes – they should reflect what you actually do, and they need to be appropriate for the size and scope of your organisation.

Be prepared to explain those processes to us at certification.

Georgina Steadman-Adams

Be sure you understand what safety goals, objectives and indicators are, and how to make them effective.

Safety goals are big statements of where you want to be (eg, everyone home safely every day).

Safety objectives are what you're going to do to get there (eg, staff are aware of their safety responsibilities and accountabilities).

Safety indicators are how you're going to measure whether you're achieving, or not achieving, your objective. For example, 100 percent completion of SMS training and 100 percent completed competency assessments – by asking 'open' and 'show me' questions to ensure understanding is met.

Having one safety goal with a few objectives is a good way to ensure you're measuring your company's performance against where you want to be (your safety goal).

Alan Daley

Any specific SMS training in your organisation, internal or external, should be recorded in staff training records. This includes the training of managers and senior persons, and shows that the responsibilities to upskill staff have been met.

Practise your emergency response plan (ERP) before your CAA certification visit. Every organisation I've dealt with has taken away lessons from doing this. Their ERP is improved, and staff and management understand their respective responsibilities and actions. Record this practice scenario in your appropriate safety meeting records.

Trevor Jellie

Think of SMS as meaning '*simple* management of safety' – don't overcomplicate or overthink it.

Management of safety is all about managing risk. Risk can be managed only if the hazards creating that risk are known. Make sure all your procedures and practices (eg, reports, investigations, audits, reviews, training and meetings) identify hazards in what you do. 'Thread' those hazards from the initial place where they are reported and recorded, through your risk assessment process, onwards to your hazard and risk register.

The register is the 'go-to' record of the level of risk you choose to operate with. It should be very familiar and well-worn!

Velma Scholz

SMS should be at the core of all your business and operational activities. It's a priority then to

really understand the processes involved, and take responsibility for them.

All staff need to receive training on SMS as it applies to their position. A good starting point for smaller operators would be for the safety manager to follow up training with a discussion to make sure everyone understands their duties and responsibilities, and how their individual commitment to safety can benefit the whole organisation.

This requires the safety manager to come up with everyday practical examples.

In terms of identifying hazards and assessing their risk, start with a bit of whole-of-staff brainstorming.

Linda Cook

Teamwork.


Get everyone in the same room, including contractors and other third parties, to identify hazards and associated risks.

You'll be amazed at the hazards the group will identify. You'll also be surprised at how many risks are shared through the organisation.

This exercise will help identify where additional training may be required, and where SOPs need changing. It will clarify responsibilities, and the best means of communicating controls to staff.

When you review your hazard register, come together again. Skype meetings are an ideal way to include those who cannot make the trip to your meeting.

This process can serve as a valuable tool for measuring how effective your controls are. It will help provide CEOs with evidence when they're asked, 'how does your organisation monitor the effectiveness of its controls, and how do you engage key stakeholders in this process?'

Kill two birds with one stone – review aviation-related hazards and health and safety hazards at the same time. Both the CAA and WorkSafe require you to review your hazards and how effective your controls are. 

// HOW TO BE A SAFETY MANAGER



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