

Transparency in Safety Management Systems

BACKGROUND

Transparency in Safety Management Systems (SMS) is imperative to the overall success of the program. It is essential for open, fair, and traceable processes. It promotes clear communication of safety-related information, data integrity, and openness in decision-making. It also provides feedback for safety reporting, which serves as an incentive for a Positive Safety Culture.

Organizations that prioritize transparency within their SMS develop a robust risk management process, encourage safety reporting, and allow for the free flow of information between management and frontline pilots. Transparency has been shown to develop a more engaged employee group and foster support for necessary changes.

It has been identified that many operators lack transparency in their SMS processes. Unfortunately, some organizations share safety information with frontline pilots on a need-to-know basis only, without disclosing the necessary details of the investigation or risk mitigation process.

This leads to trust and credibility issues between frontline personnel and the organization. Organizations that include key frontline personnel throughout the entire SMS process develop robust solutions and improve overall safety at the organization. This sets the foundation for the implementation of a Positive Safety Culture.

Transparency in SMS is crucial for fostering trust, accountability, and continuous improvement in aviation safety. It involves openly sharing information about safety performance, incidents, and hazards to enable better decision-making and proactive risk management. However, this transparency must be balanced with the protection of sensitive data, such as the de-identified information of pilots, which could otherwise compromise their privacy or lead to unintended consequences.

Safeguards should be in place to ensure that while data is shared to improve safety outcomes, personal identifiers or confidential details are removed or anonymized. By implementing strong data protection protocols and adhering to privacy regulations,

SMS can maintain transparency while upholding the confidentiality and trust of the accident and incident reporting culture.

A transparent safety management system encourages the growth of all four pillars of an SMS and is a circular process. Employees will be confident to report incidents, near misses, and hazards without fear of repercussions, improving reporting and organizational learning. This facilitates ongoing monitoring and evaluation of safety performance, promoting continuous improvement.

POSITION

IFALPA believes transparency in Safety Management Systems is imperative for a fully functional SMS. Transparency is vital for creating a safety-conscious culture, proactively identifying and addressing hazards, and maintaining stakeholder trust. By fostering open communication and data sharing, organizations can significantly improve their safety outcomes and operational performance, leading to a robust and sustainable SMS.