NEWSLETTER

What does SMS really do?

Demystifying United Airlines' Safety Management System

Historically, safety management has been based on investigating accidents or incidents and then promoting safety operations by passing the lessons learned along to front-line leaders in the form of new procedures, training and communications.

Early, during the Machine Period, the philosophy was FLY-BREAK-FIX- FLY and improvements in engines, aircraft design and airworthiness standards came from it. However, the system was reactive, expensive, and deadly.

Key Safety Message

United's approach to safety is part of our Working Together culture in support of the Go Forward Plan. United expects all co-workers to support our safety programs and abide by their standards. I strongly support a non-punitive environment for good faith reporting of threats and errors by coworkers to ensure safety and operational concerns can be addressed by the organization.

The Corporate Safety Division serves as the focal point for our SMS; however, the programs's strength is derived by the processes and procedures championed within each division. United's Safety Policy is available via the Flying Together intranet site.

-Jeff Smisek

SMS PILOT PROJECT

The FAA has adopted the principles of Safety Management Systems (SMS) for aviation service providers, and the agency's airports and aviation safety organizations are each working to develop SMS guidance for their respective service providers.

Flight Standard's organization is

conducting voluntary SMS Pilot Projects for external SMSs, specifically for Operators & Product/Service Providers. Numerous voluntary pilot project participants (approximately 130, as of April, 2011) have realized substantial safety and financial benefits through their development of a voluntary SMS.

DEMYSTIFYING SMS

...continued from page 1

The Human Period beginning in the 1970's was characterized by initiatives dealing with crew resource management, decision making and pilot judgement. With 70-80% of accidents related to Human Factors, this philosophy helped reduce mishaps by identifying what interfered with pilot judgement during critical moments of flight.

However, simply reacting to latent system deficiencies uncovered by local triggers or active failures is no longer acceptable in commercial aviation. The Organizational Period of aviation safety, organized around Safety Management Systems (SMS), fills in the gaps left by the previous two philosophies.

SMS is designed to proactively identify threats and associated risk before they have a chance to negatively impact our operation. SMS is not another safety program or a "Flavor of the month". SMS is the evolution of safety in aviation that marries the concepts of system safety and quality management.

The importance of SMS is recognized globally and the FAA will begin requiring air carriers to develop SMS programs this year. United's SMS is, and will continue to be, everyone's responsibility.

SAFETY INFORMATION

As the saying goes, "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it." As with a financial or production system, sound safety management requires information - and the more the better. What are some sources of safety information at United?

Employee Reporting

Robust voluntary reporting programs provide great potential for predictive safety data rich in detail. These reports can provide the 'what', 'how', and 'why' of the occurrence. As the eyes and ears of the operation, front-line employees may reveal latent organizational failures that may never have been determined through other data acquisition methods. Sharing of critical safety information on threats and errors can be done without fear of reprisal.

Flight Safety Investigations

Although FSIs are reactive because they deal with events that have already occurred, doing a forensic assessment of an accident or incident is valuable in identifying new threats that have not been mitigated.

Internal Audits (Quality Control)

Divisional audits, line checks, Line Operations Safety Audits (LOSA) are in place to gauge the performance and effectiveness or risk controls.

Internal Evaluation Program

The IEP is managed by the Quality Assurance Department and it measures design and performance of systems against established standards to evaluate regulatory compliance.

Industry Events

Air Serv Accident in EWR

An Air Serv bus driver was killed on December 16, 2011 at Newark Liberty International Airport when a bus he was trying to repair ran him over, police said.

FAA

On December 21, 2011, the FAA overhauled the way commercial airline pilots are scheduled to give them more rest before flying.

Airline Insurance Claims Tumble in safest year.

Global airlines insurance claims fell 45 percent to the lowest in seven years in 2011, as the industry posted its safest year on record, according to Ascend.

Co. Culture Types

PATHOLOGICAL

Responsibility is shirked, messengers are shot, failure is punished or covered up, and new ideas crushed.

BUREAUCRATIC

Information is routine, responsibility is divided, organization is just and fair, and new ideas present problems.

GENERATIVE

Responsibility is shared, information is a key resource, messengers are encouraged, failure leads to inquiry/learning, and bridging is rewarded.