

“C” is for “Consistency” – Ramp Safety





Safety Management System (SMS)

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Ramp safety briefings are an important piece of a broader topic: Safety Culture. At the foundation of a good safety culture is clear, consistent communication on safety from all levels of an organization's leadership.

In addition to communication regarding safety, senior leadership must recognize that "safety first" is not just a catchy slogan. The importance of safety and following policies and procedures every time a task is completed cannot only be brought up when something has gone wrong. A good safety culture foundation requires consistent communication. This communication starts when a new team member is hired, continues throughout initial training, recurrent training and of course through regular ramp safety briefings. When safety is truly a priority for senior leadership it will be recognized at all levels of the organization as a priority. Safety will then be a topic that is discussed on a regular basis at nearly all meetings regardless of the leadership level within the organization. Having a good safety culture requires more than just having a safety manual or safety policies, and more than occasional communication. It also requires all levels of leadership to recognize team members when safe actions are observed and thank them for following the proper procedure. This positive reinforcement encourages additional safe behavior from the team member in the future. Just as important, it requires all levels of leadership to discuss unsafe actions in a professional, respectful manner. It is critical that the team member understands the "why" behind the policy or procedure that was

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not followed properly and also realizes that the leader cares about tasks being completed in a safe manner. Ignoring these unsafe actions is also known as tacit approval. Tacit approval of unsafe behaviors encourages more unsafe behavior, not just from the team member who performed the unsafe action, but from every team member who saw the unsafe action go unaddressed by the leader.

Conversely, if safety is not a priority for senior leadership that will be apparent to the team members as well. If leaders only take the time to communicate the importance of operational metrics such as on time performance or mishandled baggage rates, those areas are where the focus of the team will be. To be clear, operational performance is critical to the success of any airline or ground handling company. We are all aware of what a competitive industry we work in. However, those operational metrics do not matter if someone sustains a serious injury or an aircraft is damaged while cutting procedural corners to achieve these other operational goals.

A leadership team that is engaged in a positive safety culture is also engaged in their operation. This allows leaders to receive feedback from team members and just as importantly follow up on that feedback. Team members will quickly lose faith that safety matters if there is not follow-up on concerns that have been brought to their leaders' attention. Listening and having professional, respectful conversations form a collaborative effort between leaders and team members that is very powerful. Safety should never be about blaming, leadership or frontline team members, but always about improving the workplace for all.

At American Airlines we are promoting the use of the phrase "It is ok to S.T.O.P." We are encouraging team members that if something does not look or feel right, it is ok to Stop Think Observe and only then Proceed. Also, we are stressing that



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asking for help early in a challenging situation is not only ok, but encouraged! Ramp safety briefings are an important part of communicating that message and these briefings give our leaders a chance to demonstrate that we must have a "safety is our top priority" attitude from all at American Airlines.

While ramp safety briefings are a critical part of ground handling aircraft, we must remember that safety is a multi-faceted subject and it requires engagement and commitment from every level of an organization.

Are you Learning from Bad Outcomes?

Regardless of your role supporting the operation, we all play a critical role in meeting our company objectives (safety, reliability, quality, customer service, security, branding, marketing, etc.). Systems are in place to provide a framework for us to operate within so that we meet these objectives. These systems include processes and procedures we are expected to follow, and equipment, tools, and training we are expected to utilize and apply. If the system is designed well, then we (employees) only need to be a reliable part of that system. In other words, we need to choose to be compliant to the system controls and, whatever you do, don't make a mistake. Needless to say, systems are never 100% reliable (i.e. faulty procedure, failing equipment, inadequate training) and neither are we as human beings. We all want to see American Airlines succeed and for each other to return home in one piece to our families each day, but systems and humans are very complex and we don't always achieve the outcomes we are looking for. So how can we "be smarter" after a bad outcome? We have a Safety Management System (SMS) in place to understand and manage "safety" risks, but the principles can be applied to any value set (i.e. quality, reliability, customer service, etc.). By using the risk management principles within the SMS, we can "be smarter" in our attempts to better manage risk moving forward. Follow the guidelines below to better understand why a failure occurred and what may need to be done to be sure we reduce the likelihood of a similar outcome occurring again.

First understand the risk we are trying to manage

After a bad outcome (i.e. injury, damage, operational disruption, customer complaint), try to understand what risk it is we are trying to manage. For example, in the case of an injury, obviously we are interested in managing the risk of the potential injury of an employee in performance of that task.

Is the system currently designed in a way to adequately manage that risk?

Analyze the system in place today. What processes, procedures, tools, equipment, training, resources are in place today for the purpose of managing that risk? Are they effective? Are there situations when they are less effective?

Did you Know?

- More than 5,500 employees in the U.S. die from workplace injuries (OSHA)
- 11,802 injuries were reported at AA in 2019
- 1 in every 5 AA employees will be injured on the job this year
- 74% - the percentage of injuries at AA resulting in claims in 2019
- \$250 million in annual workers compensation costs at AA in 2018
- 275+ mainline aircraft were damaged in 2019

These are preventable! Engage your Corporate Safety team to find out how we can improve these numbers, together.

Is our success completely reliant on an employee being compliant or not making a mistake? If so, look for ways to strengthen the system to be less reliant on, or more resilient to, the fallible humans that make up the operation.

Do our team members and leaders have the adequate personal and professional support necessary to be effective?

Professional support includes training, proficiency, skill and experience. Encourage recurrent training, coaching and mentoring, and frequent positive feedback sessions. Personal support includes proactive engagement with your team to provide avenues for addressing issues we all bring to work with us each day that can cause stress, fatigue, or distraction.

Are there errors or choices occurring in day-to-day operations that need addressing?

Remember, we are all susceptible to mistakes/errors. Look for ways to strengthen the system to either prevent the error or to catch it and correct it before we see a bad outcome. Remember, we are all also susceptible to drift when we get comfortable with a task over time. Correct drift when you see it, don't ignore it or passively condone it!

By following these steps, retrospectively after a bad outcome, you should be able to easily identify several opportunities to implement meaningful and effective solutions to prevent a recurrence. The key is to be analytical and holistic about your review. Overly focusing on the individuals involved rarely provide meaningful change. This analytical approach will allow you to better manage risk and produce more reliable outcomes as a team. Let's be smarter together!

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