



# Safety Management System (SMS)

## “C” is for “Consistency”—Ramp Safety

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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

