



Federal Aviation
Administration

FAA Implements Safety Management System

News & Updates



March 10—The FAA's Air Traffic Organization is now operating under a Safety Management System. This enables the FAA to manage the risks associated with changes in the National Airspace System that include installing, modifying and removing equipment, as well as modifying and implementing procedures and airspace changes.

"An effective safety management system lets us manage both the risks and the challenges of introducing new technology into the National Airspace System," said Randy Babbitt, FAA Administrator. "Practically speaking, SMS is as important as the new technology itself. We're able to assess risks with a standardized approach. SMS will be a huge boost for NextGen."

The Safety Management System serves as a framework to allow the FAA to identify, assess and manage safety risks associated with changes to the National Airspace System (NAS). For example, as NextGen technology is introduced into the airspace system, an air traffic safety team will conduct a risk analysis and document the technology's safety impact on the NAS. The FAA conducted this type of review for the Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Broadcast (ADS-B) technology before it became operational in the Gulf of Mexico.

In 2004, the FAA initiated a plan to implement an agency-wide Safety Management System, in accordance with requirements the International Civil Air Navigation Organization (ICAO) has established. Four main components make up the Safety Management System: safety policy, safety assurance, safety risk management, and safety promotion. Safety policy defines the safety management system philosophy, how implementation is carried out, and functions, processes, and responsibilities. Safety assurance measures the safety of the NAS through reviews, evaluations, audits, inspections, investigations, and data tracking and analysis. Safety risk management identifies hazards and mitigations to safety risks. Safety Promotion includes training and communication of lessons learned, which contribute to promoting a positive safety culture.

"I am extremely pleased at the dedication and hard work of safety professionals across the Air Traffic Organization that has led to the approval of the Safety Management System," Babbitt said.

The FAA's Aviation Safety and Airports offices will also establish Safety Management Systems by the end of fiscal year 2010.