

# Just the **two** of us

Two-people certificated operations are required to establish a Safety Management System, just as much as the largest airline. Here, three operators talk about implementing their SMS plan.

**W**ith SMS implementation plans for all Group 2 participants now submitted, the time has arrived to put them into action.

Austin Healey, of the CAA's Safety Management System implementation team, is saying to small operators that they should keep on keeping it simple.

"Sometimes an operator – and not just small operators – will design a perfectly acceptable, simple, appropriate plan. But then, in putting it into practice, they do a virtual cut and paste from somebody else's manual, or of something off the internet. And all they've done is make it complicated.

"I say to operators, 'think about your manual, your exposition, as being like a contract. You sign the contract, and we've accepted the contract, so you don't want to put any extra stuff in the manual that you can't do, because then you're in breach of your contract'."

SMS specialist with the CAA Penny Stevenson advises operators to be methodical as they work through their plan.

"You've put a huge amount of work into the plan, so now just follow the plan.

"Go over it regularly with staff, make sure the tasks are being done. There will inevitably be more tasks as you go along, and you will find places where you realise a certain idea is crazy and it won't work. It's fine to change it to something else simpler and more appropriate. And call us if you need reassurance about changing stuff."

Winkie Sisson, who – together with her partner, Marc Mangan – owns Central Ag Air in Otago, believes there's nothing too scary once the plan is complete.

"I'm just going to do it the way it works best for us," says Winkie, who is going to get more training on implementing her plan.

"I've worked out how long things are going to take me, and I've set them out in the order that seems to work for us. I've got a board set up with my timeline and what things I have to do first myself, and what things I can work on together with Marc."

Winkie's top tip to other operators is to make use of the resources of the Safety Management International Collaboration Group or SMICG (see 'Resources').

"They're fantastic. Even though they don't give you everything in an exact format, they offer really sensible solutions for small organisations."



Kelly Cullen – safety manager at Campbell Copters in Whangarei – says her plan will also be put into practice systematically.

“Everything is going into our diaries. We all have tasks and goals for each month, we all have diary reminders, and we’ll all be constantly aware of where we’re supposed to be.”

Charlotte Mills, SMS specialist with the CAA, says that’s really important during the implementation period.

“Implementation involves monitoring how the plan is going, and reassessing resources and timeframes if you start falling behind.”

Trevor Jellie, of the CAA’s heli and ag operations unit, says the key for the smallest operators is being on the lookout for the forward-looking and proactive elements of their SMS, particularly if their plan changes as they put it into practice.

“From an operating perspective, they need to be able to recognise how activities such as investigations, internal audits, management of change, and reporting all feed into a central bucket of risk management.”

Trevor says the best plans he has seen have identified gaps, not just in the manual, but also in the day-to-day procedures of the operation.

“Stay focussed on those. Fixing gaps in manuals alone won’t give you an SMS.

“Sometimes it’s hard for two- or three-people organisations to look at their operation critically, which is a good reason to get further training, or ask for guidance from the SMS team.”

Charlotte Mills advises operators that, if they haven’t already done so, they should start getting buy-in from staff now.

“A huge part of managing change is keeping staff informed and ‘with’ the change. Then when your SMS implementation date comes around, the transition should be seamless.”

Certainly, the first step for Nigel Griffith from Patchett Ag Air in Blenheim has been staff engagement.

“We only have four staff and we work in pilot-and-loader driver pairs, and remotely from each other. So it’s important the guys take on board what SMS is about. I can’t be there with all of them all the time.”

Nigel, who has a spreadsheet with the steps he needs to implement SMS and the months he needs to implement them, is using a free application he downloaded from the internet which he says is a “really good hazard identification and incident reporting tool”.

“The guys just fill out the details on their phone and it comes alive on mine. I’m having to still prompt them about reporting; that will take a while but reporting has increased a bit. That’s good because they are beginning to realise its significance.”

Kelly Cullen agrees, saying the five full-timers and one part-timer at Campbell Copters “have an absolute role to play” in SMS, especially with reporting.

“That’s where we want them giving us feedback on what’s going to make their day better – how they can work smarter rather than harder, and how we can support them to work as safely as they can.

“The staff will become engaged, dependent on how we (Kelly, and the owners, Mal and Neil Campbell) put it across. But I think all staff like to be involved and they all like to be informed.”

Kelly’s top tip is “don’t pause”.

“Just because we’ve got our implementation plan in, we’re still moving it along. Otherwise it’ll be certification day and we won’t be ready.” ■

## Resources

Visit [www.caa.govt.nz/sms](http://www.caa.govt.nz/sms) for links to:

- » Guidance for Part 137 operators (useful for other small operators too)
- » Booklet seven from CASA
- » SMICG, for small operators
- » EHASt, for rotary operations.

For help, email [sms@caa.govt.nz](mailto:sms@caa.govt.nz).