

SMS SCALABILITY

How can complex, non-complex, large, medium, or small businesses all comply with the same requirements in the SMS evaluation tool? Our SMS specialists offer some tips.

Georgina Steadman-Evans

It *can* seem difficult for a small two-person business to come to terms with scaling down the requirements of the SMS evaluation tool. You might think some items are not applicable or others are too large for your operation. But I can guarantee you all the items in the SMS evaluation tool can be scaled to the size of your business.

For large complex businesses such as Air New Zealand, there'll be many metrics to measure safety performance – goals, objectives, targets and indicators – as there's plenty of measurable data available to the airline. Smaller businesses may feel that by comparison, they simply don't produce enough data that can be measured.

My advice is to look at the hazards you've identified and choose the one hazard posing the most risk to your business. Look at its controls and measure those as part of your safety performance.

Here's an example: mechanical failure in aircraft (hazard); operational flight check (control). The next step is to identify how you'll measure your control.

Monitor the operational flight checks that have identified defects or maintenance errors. If you start to see a rising trend in defects or errors for a particular maintenance provider, assign actions at your next safety meeting: for example, your safety manager or an expert external resource to conduct an audit/investigation of the maintenance organisation.

Measure areas of importance because then you will get more from measuring your safety performance.

Simon Carter

The bottom line for any safety management system is that the system must work for you and should not be an onerous task. It should, instead, just form part of your overall management process.

If you're a small paper-based organisation – whether you've gone through SMS certification or your organisation has this coming up this year – review how many forms you're using and ask yourselves, 'Can we simplify our processes?' Some organisations have effectively combined their reporting, investigation and auditing requirements into one form. The same thinking applies if you have a digital platform – keep your electronic presentations simple.

As Georgina has said, look at your risk controls. Ask yourselves, 'Do we have an operational directive in the manual or a SOP to cover that risk? Or are we relying on a general entry in the risk register because it's what we think we do or would like to do?' A spot check in the field against the SOP is an easy way of auditing a risk control.

Although it's important to monitor your reported safety occurrences for trends, ensure you're also looking toward what could go wrong or what could have an adverse effect on your operation. This can be done through encouraging proactive reporting and discussions at both the toolbox meeting level and the management review level.

Managing safety proactively is the essence of SMS. ➤

For your free copy of the Good Aviation Practice booklet, *How to be a safety manager*, email publications@caa.govt.nz.

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SAFETY PROCEDURES

WORK SAFETY