



Watchlist Fact Sheet — Air

Air safety management systems

Transport Canada does not always provide effective oversight of aviation companies transitioning to safety management systems, while some companies are not even required to have one.

Background

Implemented properly, safety management systems (SMS) allow aviation companies on their own to identify hazards, manage risks, and develop and follow effective safety processes. Canada's large commercial carriers have been required to have an SMS since 2005. However, for smaller operators, such as those which do aerial work or provide air taxi or commuter services,¹ implementation has been delayed to provide additional time to refine procedures, guidance material and training. Yet together, this group incurred 91 % of commercial aircraft accidents and 93 % of commercial fatalities from 2002 to 2011. Transport Canada (TC) indicates that SMS will be implemented in all regulated civil aviation organizations by 2015.

The transition to SMS has proved to be challenging. A 2008 report by the Auditor General of Canada highlighted gaps in TC's planning and implementation as well as oversight of SMS operators. In addition, recent investigations by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) have highlighted difficulties faced by operators in transitioning from traditional safety management to SMS.²

Until SMS are more broadly implemented within the aviation industry, the TSB remains concerned regarding the risks to Canadians, and will continue to monitor progress in this area.

Solution

Transport Canada must effectively monitor the integration of SMS practices into day-to-day operations. Moreover, SMS practices need to be adopted by all companies.

¹ Subparts 702, 703 and 704 of the *Canadian Aviation Regulations*.

² TSB investigation reports A09A0016 and A07A0134.