

VICTORIA IMPLEMENTS SMS

On Nov. 26 the Victoria Airport Authority (VAA) implemented the first Transport Canada-compliant Safety Management System (SMS) and set a new standard in the Canadian airports industry. Conforming fully to Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs), the VAA SMS includes the Transport Canada SMS protocol and meets ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

This achievement is the result of a lot of hard work and forward thinking by Victoria Airport CEO Richard Paquette and airside operations manager Vince Miller, and a commitment by QualaTech Aero Consulting Ltd. The Sidney, BC firm developed, documented and delivered an SMS Manual that is a living guide to safe operations and a demonstration by VAA that here is a new approach – proactive compliance rather than prescriptive enforcement.

Based on ICAO standards, CARs define a Safety Management System as a systematic, explicit, comprehensive and proactive process for managing safety risks that integrates operational and

technical systems with financial and human resource management to achieve safe operations and compliance with Canadian Aviation Regulations.

VAA's Paquette and Miller and QualaTech president Keith Green believe that the VAA SMS will stand up to any test by Transport Canada and ICAO, as does QualaTech safety expert and SMM author David Olsen, who sees VAA as a centre of excellence in the field.

Fundamental to the SMS is the Safety Management Manual (SMM) – “if it isn't documented, you haven't got it,” says Olsen. The SMM, while not replacing the Airport Operations Manual (AOM), must be referenced by it. From the CARs, Transport Canada derived a six-part SMS protocol. An airport SMS based on the protocol demonstrates a proactive compliance with SMS regulation and makes for economy and efficiency both for the operator and Transport Canada. Compliance and audit are streamlined by having an approved SMS, since the performance measure is the classic quality management approach – “do they

do what they say they do?”

There is nothing mysterious or complicated about safety management, but a functioning, documented SMS makes the process systematic, repeatable and a natural part of everyday operations. But documenting and announcing an SMS does not banish the chance of an accident. Safety is about management of risk, or by international definition “freedom from unacceptable risk of harm.”

A Safety Management System that is fully accepted and practised from the top down can prevent most unsafe conditions other than the true accident – the event that cannot be foreseen. For this, a safety culture has to take hold. Assessing and managing risk by “thinking the unthinkable” prevents most, if not all incidents caused by human error. Part of the culture means continuous learning. Human factor and safety management training go hand-in-hand as a defence against passengers or employees suffering harm at the airport. ✕

– Staff