

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN  
Ministry of Transportation  
and Telecommunications



مَمْلَكَةُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ  
وَأَزَارَةُ الْمَوَاطِنَاتِ وَالْإِتِّصَالَاتِ

## **INFORMATION PAPER**

### **State Safety Program- the Bahrain Experience**

This paper was prepared for presentation to the delegates attending the ICAO RASG Meeting held in the Kingdom of Bahrain September 2017. It details the experience of the introduction of the State Safety Program to the Kingdom's aviation industry.



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## Introduction

The Kingdom of Bahrain was a signatory to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) in 1944, and has been an active member since 1971. A lot of responsibility is placed on the ICAO contracting State to develop and maintain a strong State Safety Program (SSP). The program is an integrated set of Regulations and activities aimed at improving Aviation Safety.

The CAA's objective is to develop a world class safety environment, in partnership with the aviation industry, by making continuous improvements in aviation safety in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The State Safety Program (SSP) is a living process that monitors the CAA's safety performance and continues to seek improvements in aviation safety. This paper does not seek to define an SSP, rather to describe the experience of introduction.

The introduction of the program has presented many challenges- challenges not only in terms of resources, but of changing the very safety culture itself. Any large change faces hurdles: The rewards in this case, however, far outweigh any problems encountered, and these rewards are reaped over many years into the future.



## The Challenges

### Culture

Usually, the biggest challenge facing those with the task of safety management is resourcing. However, with fundamental change represented by an SSP, the biggest challenge we have found is in culture change.

All managers, when shown the benefits that a program such as a SSP- and the standardization of SMS's- will bring, agree with the concept wholeheartedly. Especially when there is very little budget impact! However, as can be seen in safety enhancements such as Just Culture, a problem lies in the changes in *thinking* that are required for successful implementation. These changes in thinking must begin at the top. Having these changes accepted by the most senior levels is critical to a successful outcome. We were fortunate in Bahrain to have total support from Ministerial level, which eased the implementation process.

### Responsibilities and Accountabilities

The SSP has brought the concept of 'layering of oversight'. Whereas prior to introduction, many stakeholders reported directly to the BCAA, the SSP required them to change reporting lines. For example; an airline having had a ramp event, formerly reported directly to the BCAA. They were now required to report to the BCAA via the Airport Operator, as that entity was the next higher in the oversight of that particular event. Initially, this represented a significant challenge- the undoing of "silo-ing" of responsibility. The change in thinking to include all



involved in both reporting and solutions is uncomfortable, yet both necessary and fruitful.

Not many CEO's are happy with Safety Management directly reporting. This direct reporting requirement brings the accountability closer, sometimes uncomfortably closer, and can be resisted in some quarters. It should be obvious that an Accountable Manager who shies away from his key accountability has more than just a cultural problem.

## Safety Oversight

A cornerstone of an SSP is the objective of constant improvement in safety. One cannot recognize improvement if safety is not measured. To many, the absence of accidents represents 'safety'. However, as we know, that is not the case. The development of leading indicators is critical to managing the direction of safety performance, and this can be a difficult concept to grasp. Which leads us to....

## Training

One of the biggest challenges we have faced is in the area of training- not only in its provision, but engaging staff. Despite the common misconception that safety just 'happens', the raising of awareness through training is critical to improving performance. Motivating staff to engage with the available training reduces different barriers, because once personnel understand the concepts, they are far more likely to implement your processes effectively. Killing the idea that safety training is a waste of time is a difficult dragon to slay. Too often it is considered unnecessary for staff to need to understand the why- just do it! That is counterproductive when it comes to the SSP.



## The Solutions

### Quick Wins

Updating our regulatory suite, especially with the assistance of ICAO regarding Annex 19, made a lot of what comes later, easier. This should be considered as part of the foundation of SSP introduction.

Once senior governmental approval is obtained, the formation of an implementation team is essential. Often, these tasks are loaded onto existing workloads, and not prioritized. This is a mistake. Having a focal point who is fully conversant with the subject material and sufficiently senior to drive the necessary changes as head of that team is vital. He must have clear direction on the priority of the task.

Assemble the stakeholders and clearly outline the changes in oversight layers and reporting, as soon as possible. The sooner the potential for resistance in this area is reduced, the better.

Data collection: The automation/electronic tools available implemented from an early point allows ease of collection and methodical analysis. A mountain of data is useless if it is not assessed effectively. To that end, we have employed the internet for reporting, enabling both required information and voluntary reports (which can be made anonymously) via links on our website. This is backed by Q-Pulse software which helps with orderly assignment of ownership, tracking and collation.



## Longer Term

The data collected feeds our SSP dashboard, giving us trend information. This information is reviewed twice-yearly by the State Safety Review Board (SRB). The SRB then directs the Safety Action Group (SAG) to place resources where they are most needed. We expect this targeted resourcing to have long term benefits, crystallizing the vision of the SSP concept.

Reviewing the Implementation Plan and its timeline is critical. Sometimes, the pressure produced becomes difficult, but any derailment can lead to malaise. The Minister has been very supportive of maintaining a strict timeline (the phased timeline can be viewed on our website).

States should expect to have to engage more resources than you had planned for in training. The concepts are difficult, and a lack of understanding will lead to disengagement. Training will also have to be undertaken for all levels of staff to a greater depth than expected.

## Download

Our SSP can be viewed online from our website here

[http://www.mot.gov.bh/sites/default/files/ssp\\_bahrain\\_signed\\_04092015\\_0.pdf](http://www.mot.gov.bh/sites/default/files/ssp_bahrain_signed_04092015_0.pdf)

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