

Short talk: SMS - Certification

ICAO Workshop: Dubai, February 20/21, 2003

When I received the first ICAO draft: "Manual on Certification of Aerodromes" at the beginning of March 2000 from my professional body, the ACI (I am a member of the ACI World Operational Safety Subcommittee), my first thought was that the ICAO had now also gone crazy since it seemed to me that bureaucracy would be given a new field of activity.

Foil 1 - Certification on Aerodromes DOC 9774

Don't we have enough regulations, controls and certification activities as it is? Actually, I have a very reasonable impression of Mr. ICAO, - Mr. Rao. Then I heard about highly excessive workloads at various ICAO offices in Montreal. And now such a bureaucratic worldwide initiative. An initiative entailing considerable time, work and costs. Cussing and cursing, I turned to my colleague Mr. Wolfram from the German Airport Association. To start with, there was a shaking of heads here as well. The intentions of the ICAO were probably not grasped right away.

The work that could be expected appeared enormous. After all, we knew that in Germany just everything is laid down in licensing procedures, regulations and requirements. You just have to know your way about to find the processes, texts and wording of the law and work regulations.

ACI immediately asked for a statement from various airports. So I sat down, wrote my assessments and judgments and sent a statement from Munich Airport to Mr. ACI World, Mr. Gamper. The advantages and drawbacks of the ICAO's endeavours were presented in brief, objectively and with restraint. Of course, I was only voicing a German view. Our colleagues at Frankfurt also drafted a statement, but this was mainly of an editorial nature.

Today, 3 years on, my view has swung round some 180 degrees. I have seen the light and am now a strong advocate of the required ICAO procedures.

What changed my mind?

Recently, the advent of privatisation and the consequent commercially oriented approach to management of licensed aerodromes has created a significant change: business-driven objectives have assumed a higher priority and management structures and skills have shifted towards a more business-focussed culture. We have to ensure that as these commercial and other pressures increased, there would be no reduction in the priority attached to safety.

My basic statement today is that we all must have an aviation safety management system.

An airport is, as we all know, a highly complex system in which many different organisations are involved: airlines, air traffic control, the airport company, government departments, police, customs, border control, different ground handling agencies and many others.

The whole of the aeronautical community must cooperate closely to ensure a safe and healthy environment at all airports.

Dr. Dunham, one of the former General Director of ACI, says the same as I would: "Experience has shown that for the most part apron accidents can be prevented. Therefore it is of crucial importance that apron managers create and maintain a safe apron environment to protect passengers, workers, aircraft and equipment. The new ICAO development provides a comprehensive set of guidelines to assist apron managers to promote safety awareness. So the SMS is now intended to fill gaps in aviation safety guidance materials."

What have we done to move this big issue in the right direction?

The first measure I suggested for to provide a new planning unit: "Airport Safety Management" – not a easy undertaking at the present time. We then selected an employee who knows the interdependencies between the different bodies and persons involved in aviation. For many years now, airports have been operated by "specialists in subareas". Try finding the right employee who understands the interconnections. This SMS employee was integrated as "Duty Officer" in the "Airport Operation" department. His first duties were to sift through various brochures, documents, procedures and endeavours. It soon became clear that different countries tackled the objectives of ICAO DOC 9774 by different methods.

Foil 2 / 3 – TC

We found the documentation of Transport Canada very good as a means of establishing a platform on which to build and gear our actions.

Foil 4 - Konzeptvorschlag

We very quickly drafted 2 documents as a statement of principles that answered basic questions for the official controlling bodies and for airport management (one document is available in English). Introduction of an airport SMS now seems feasible to me, is not cost-intensive and is also not bureaucratic.

Foil 5 – SMS-System

Uniform standard procedures also seem possible to me now. At present, various state and national authorities are examining these proposals and adopting them.

Foil 6 - Aerodrome Inspection list

And in order to make advances in the issue of "Airport certification" in compliance with the ICAO's recommendation, control sheets have been developed. Various technical facilities, operating procedures, organizations and work processes will have to undergo review in future.

In Germany, most of the new requirements for certification of aerodromes are already stipulated in our licensing procedures, as well as in a more decentralised approach representing our federal form of government. Adaptation of the new ICAO requirements would require a compilation of data scattered among several separate licences and permissions and documentations in a single and certainly more handy Aerodrome Operation Manual.

In my view, all the ICAO requirements relating to certification have been fulfilled in various countries.

However, creation of a "Safety Manual", a standardised reporting system and a uniform data entry system will doubtless keep us busy for some time to come.

Nevertheless, the deadline of November 2005 seems to me to be absolutely realistic.,

Safety Management System

