

Just Culture

**ICAO/IFATCA Safety Culture Workshop
19-22.05.2026**

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International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations

ICAO Annex 13 says

OBJECTIVE OF THE INVESTIGATION

3.1

The sole objective of the investigation of an accident or incident shall be the prevention of accidents and incidents. It is not **the purpose of this activity to apportion blame or liability.**

Annex 13
To the Convention on
International Civil Aviation

Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation

ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF THE INVESTIGATION

5.4

- a) the gathering, recording and analysis of all available information on that accident or incident;
- b) if appropriate, the issuance of safety recommendations;
- c) if possible, the determination of the **causes**; and
- d) the completion of the final report.



Answer these questions:

What is the purpose of Just Culture if we follow Annex 13?

Is Just culture blame free?

How do we enhance safety with Just Culture?

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Purpose of Just Culture

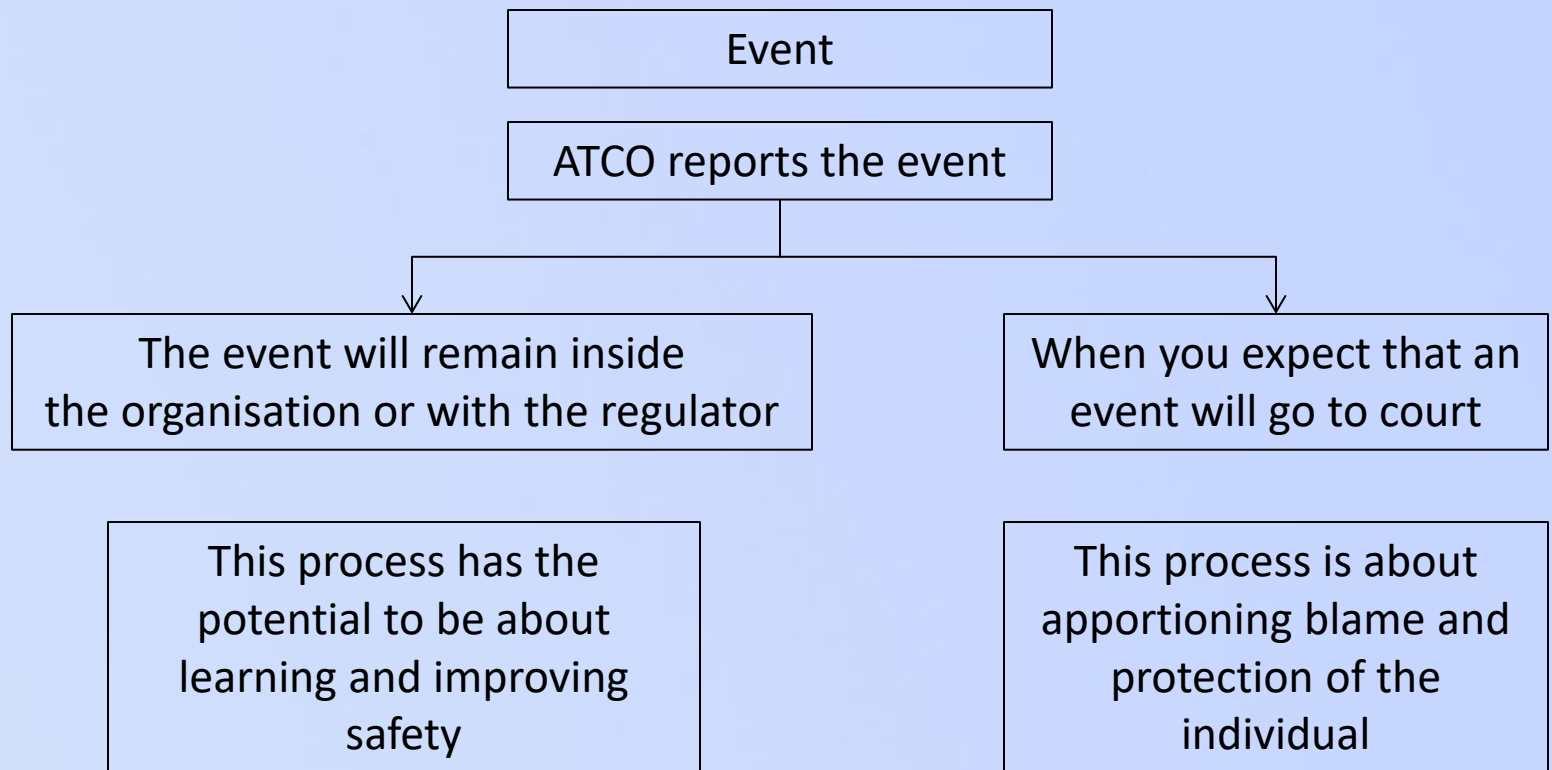
The IFATCA Manual describes Just Culture as fundamentally necessary to make ATM operation safer in the future.

It should be a common aim for all stakeholder in ATM

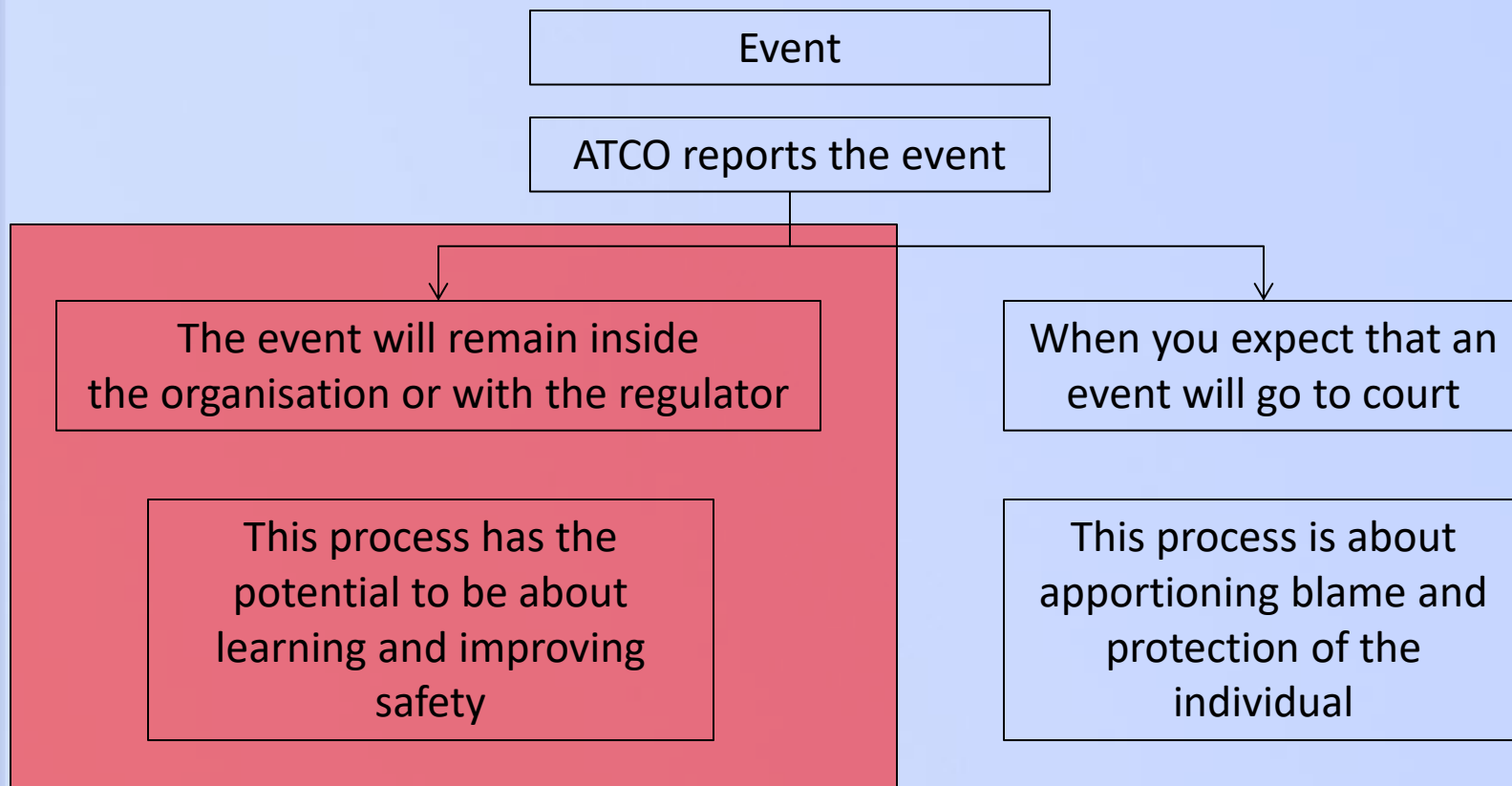
Incidents is an opportunity to learn



Reporting can take two paths



Reporting can take two paths



Suggestions for internal investigations, two possibilities

Seeking causes

- Errors
- Violation of rules
- Failure to do
- Incompetence
- Should have/could have language
- Easily leads to blame
- Humans as a risk

Seeking explanations

- Explain, explain, explain
- Reveals complexity and trade-offs, e.g. safe and efficient
- Understanding of factors that influence daily work
- Humans as the flexible part of the system

Suggestions for internal investigations, two possibilities

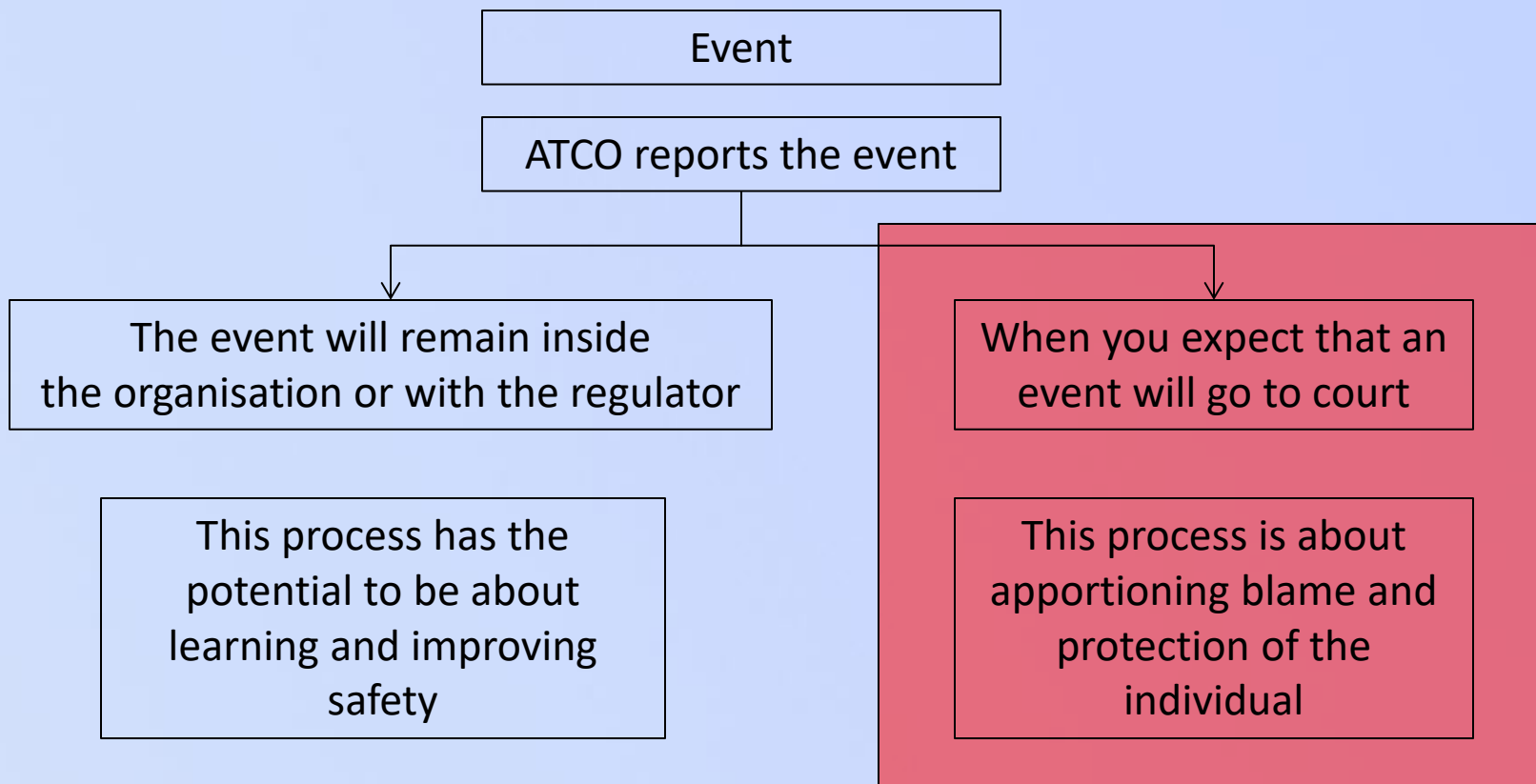
Explain, explain and explain

The operator reports and help the
'system' or the organisation understand
where increased risk is situated

Instead of,

The 'system' or the organisation that
tells the operator where he/she went
wrong

Reporting can take two paths



You can learn or you can blame

A LINE IN THE SAND



Dilemmas that Define Us

JC – what to do?

- Trust,
 - Confidentiality, Managers, Supervisors, Colleagues, other stakeholders
- Start influencing the general organisational understanding of just culture. Here you can make publications available to management and colleagues, which explains incidents as an opportunity to learn instead of blame and shame. This can be part of seminars and workshops.
- Work on removing organisational disciplinary actions after an incident.
- If you don't have an investigation unit – ask for the introduction of incident investigation based on the different view
- Put CISM (critical incident stress management) on the organisational agenda
- Arrangements for drawing the line
- Data protection
- IFATCA Guidelines
- It never starts and it never stops

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When you expect that an event will go to court

Help to the individual ATCO:

Lawyer, understanding of ATM/complex systems

Detailed understanding of the event, human factors investigation
and explanation

The defence strategy

Trade-offs

**In these situation's there is no one truth. There is no one
objective account of what happened.**

Just Culture definition

A culture in which front line operators or others are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions taken by them that are commensurate with their experience and training, but where gross negligence, wilful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated.

Member Associations shall promote the creation of mandatory incident reporting systems based on confidential reporting in a just culture among their service provider(s), Civil Aviation Administration(s), National Supervisory Authorities) and members.

IFATCA Technical and Professional manual

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