



WORKING PAPER

PA-RAST/54 — WP/
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**Fifty-Four Pan America — Regional Aviation Safety Team Meeting
(PA-RAST/54)**

Miami, United States, 15 to 17 February 2022

Agenda Item: Other ARC updates

COMPLIMENTING SSP OVERSIGHT FOR GROUND HANDLING WITH ISAGO

(Presented by IATA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted airline, airport and probably regulator resources, including those normally devoted to oversight activities. To support and supplement the air operator’s oversight of outsourced ground handling operations, the IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) exists as an independent assessment of a ground handling service provider against industry-developed organization management, operational standards, and best practices.

The continued adoption of ISAGO by the industry despite the pandemic, provides safety assurances of ground operations. The ISAGO audit reports, if recognized by the regulatory authority, compensate for the lack of an air operator’s own oversight audits or can provide additional data source to complement risk-based oversight activities of an air operator. In addition, the ISAGO audits and audit reports can provide safety assurances that contribute to a State Safety Programme, supplementing aerodrome certification and aerodrome licensing requirements that are in alignment with the Global Aviation Safety Plan 2020-2022 Goals two and five – strengthen their safety oversight capabilities and expand the use of industry programs.

Action:	a) The RASG-PA encourage States to complement their State Safety Programme and air operator regulatory activities through recognition of ISAGO as an acceptable means of oversight for ground handling service providers.
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Strategic Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety
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References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICAO Annex 19 • ICAO Document 10121 • ISAGO Program Manual
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ground handling operations are performed by air operators with self-handling facilities or are outsourced to ground handling service providers contracted by the air operator. The ground handling operations are performed in accordance with, in most cases, procedures and standards based on industry best practices published by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). These procedures, standards and best practices are generated by technical groups of subject matter experts from both airlines and ground service providers.
- 1.2 State regulations usually make the contracting air operator responsible for oversight of the outsourced operations. To support and supplement the air operator's oversight, the IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) exists as an independent assessment of a ground handling service provider against industry-developed organization management, and operational standards. Today, close to 200 ground handling service providers are currently registered under ISAGO. ISAGO audits have been performed in more than 270 ground handling service provider "stations" located at over 200 airports worldwide.
- 1.3 The publication of Doc 10121 demonstrated that ICAO acknowledges the safety implications in ground handling and its inclusion in a State Safety Programme. This position is acknowledged further by making ground handling a specific agenda item at the Third High Level Safety Conference, which has now been incorporated in the High-level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC 2021). The HLCC was held in October 2021 and as a result of the ground handling discussion States and industry were asked to continue to develop a flexible and balanced approach for the oversight of ground handling.
- 1.4 The Tenth Meeting of the Regional Aviation Safety Group Asia and Pacific Regions (RASG-APAG/10, held during December 2020) acknowledged the contribution of ISAGO in the oversight of ground handling and recognized the safety assurance benefits that ISAGO brings during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and encouraged States/Administrations to complement their State Safety Programme and air operator regulatory activities through recognition of ISAGO as an acceptable means of oversight of ground handling service providers.
- 1.5 The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted airline, airport, and probably regulator resources, including resources normally devoted to oversight activities. The impact may be long-lasting.

2. Discussion

- 2.1 293 audits were completed in 2021, 88 of them were performed remotely. ISAGO continues to provide safety assurances for ground operations, with GSP's required to have fully functional SMS in place and ground operations procedures that secure safe operations.
- 2.2 On average, 210 audits are completed each year, there are 60 accredited members of the Charter of Professional Auditors who perform the audits. Prior to COVID-19, the average

number of findings per report was 20, which reduced to 10 during the years 2020-2021 primarily due to limitation of the remote audit methodology. The top areas identified are: SMS integrated and implemented throughout organization to manage safety risks, Safety assurance program including detailed audit planning and sufficient resources, Safety risk assessment and mitigation program including implemented and integrated processes, Management and control of internal and external documentation, and Training program – ensure that trained and competent staff performs basic and specific SMS duties.

- 2.3 The ISAGO audit reports can, if recognized by the regulatory authority, compensate for the lack of an air operator’s own oversight audits, and provide additional data source to complement risk-based oversight activities of an air operator. In addition, the ISAGO audits and audit reports provide assurances that contribute to a State Safety Programme (SSP), supplementing aerodrome certification and aerodrome licensing requirements.
- 2.4 The goals of the Global Aviation Safety Plan 2020-2022 (ICAO Document 10004) include a call for all States to strengthen their safety oversight capabilities and expand the use of industry programs (GASP Goals 2 and 5). The ISAGO Program can be used to complement both goals by enhancing the safety performance of operations that are generally not directly regulated and for which there are no globally applicable regulatory provisions.
- 2.5 The ISAGO auditing standards, outlined in the ISAGO Standards Manual, require a fully implemented Safety Management System and are fully aligned with the corresponding ground handling service provider provisions specified in ICAO Doc 10121, Manual on Ground Handling, which was published in December 2019, and with ICAO Annex 19.
- 2.6 Regulators, air operators and airports can apply to IATA to gain access to ISAGO registration information and the ISAGO audit reports. The access is free for regulators and airports that support the ISAGO Program. Regulators and airports are also invited to observe ISAGO audits and participate in mutually beneficial activities through memorandum of understanding or similar agreements. The IATA regional office for the Americas can assist with this.

3. Action by the Meeting

- 3.1 The PA-RAST is invited to:
- a) note the information presented,
 - b) acknowledge the contribution of ISAGO to ICAO Document 10121 and Annex 19 in the oversight of ground handling and recognize the safety assurance benefits that ISAGO brings during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - c) encourage States to complement their State Safety Programme and air operator regulatory activities through recognition of ISAGO as an acceptable means of oversight of ground handling service providers.

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