ARG/US®

PRISM

A member of the SGS Group

NEWSLETTER

August 2025 | Volume XXV | Issue VIII

SAFETYWIRE

The Scale Problem — How SMS Can Work for GA

(**Source:** James Williams, FAA Safety Briefing Magazine, July 1, 2025)

“That doesn’t apply to me.” This is a favorite retort when trying to avoid seemingly unnecessary work. We’ve all said it. I know I have — many times. My initial response to safety management system (SMS) was the same impulse. But over time, as I’ve learned more, I’ve come to appreciate the connection between general aviation and SMS. I always saw SMS as something fit for large operators like airlines or charter companies. When reading the earlier academic guidance on SMS, it seemed like the scale was a nonstarter for your average general aviation (GA) pilot. When you’re the line pilot, chief pilot, director of training, director of safety, and CEO all in one, it can make you feel like you are too small for such a system. But the scalability of SMS solves this problem. SMS has four key components: safety policy, safety risk management, safety assurance, and safety promotion. I can feel many of your rolling eyes across time and space, but I assure you, SMS can work for you.

Downsizing

The four components of SMS are designed to be more of a concept than a detailed process. The idea isn’t for the average GA pilot to have the same process as an airline; it is to maximize the resources that you do have by providing a framework. That framework can be updated and revised to meet current challenges and learn from previous experiences. Let’s look at each component and how it could be implemented in our more austere environment.

Safety policy can be as simple as a statement of intent, some basic processes, and a set of personal minimums. Just writing down what you normally do would be a good baseline to start from. You'd be surprised how much the process of writing things out reinforces their effectiveness. But with these simple documents in hand, we can move to the next component. Safety risk management puts the safety policy into action. You compare the current (and forecast) conditions against your personal minimums and preferably record that for the next component. You use your processes in conjunction with established checklists to **provide consistent performance**. Safety assurance is about making sure the other components are working within your SMS. Did your last flight have any issues? Were there any issues with the policy or the application of the policy? This feedback is a critical component of SMS. SMS is a living process. It adapts to changing conditions and circumstances. This is where the final component, safety promotion, comes in.

While the first three components form a closed cycle, safety promotion functions in and around all the steps. Your safety analysis will likely create some insights that might be applicable to more pilots out there, and those pilots will likely have other insights you could benefit from. Sharing insights and outcomes from your SMS with other pilots and hearing from them allows you to crowdsource your safety. And this is an excellent example of safety promotion.

Making it Practical

Free online tools like Google's Workspace applications can help you automate the process of creating and collecting data. These online tools can also make it easier to share your systems and processes. This allows for rapid iteration between you and other users to find flaws or improvements. It also gives you a larger data pool to find issues faster. This can be especially useful in environments like type clubs or flying clubs, where similar equipment allows for good comparisons. For a great example of this, check out the article "New Year, New (Safer) Operations" from our Jan/Feb 2024 issue.

As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day, and your SMS won't be either. But you can lay the foundations in an hour or two. Don't worry about it being perfect. Perfection is an awesome goal, but our more immediate objective is to keep improving every flight. Your personal SMS is a great framework for that. Improve your flight, improve your SMS, improve your flight, and so on. Soon it will be second nature, and you'll wonder why you thought it was such a big hassle.

Learn More

- FAA's SMS webpage
- AC-120–92D, *Safety Management Systems for Aviation Service Providers*

James Williams is an FAA Safety Briefing associate editor and photo editor. He is also a pilot and ground instructor.

This article was originally published in the July/August 2025 issue of FAA Safety Briefing magazine.
https://www.faa.gov/safety_briefing

Bizjet Accident Fatalities Soar in First Half of 2025 - 18 fatal turbine business aircraft accidents worldwide claimed 81 passengers and crewmembers

(Source: Gordon Gilbert, AIN, June 3, 2025)

A suspected landing gear failure caused a Lear 35A to veer off the runway at Arizona's Scottsdale Airport as it was landing, and slam into a Gulfstream G200 parked on the ramp. The accident left one dead and several injured. © screenshot from ABC News video

Eighteen fatal turbine business aircraft accidents worldwide claimed the lives of 81 passengers and crew in the first half, up from 17 fatal accidents and 54 fatalities in the first six months of 2024, according to preliminary data gathered by **AIN**.

Notably, U.S.-registered business jets made up the only segment to complete the first six months with fewer fatalities than in the same period last year. Nine people lost their lives in three U.S.-registered business jet accidents last year versus eight people who died—also in three accidents—this year.

On February 10, a parked Gulfstream G200 was struck by a U.S.-registered Learjet 35A that veered off the runway while landing in Scottsdale, Arizona, killing the Learjet pilot. Another fatal accident involving an N-numbered business jet occurred on March 13, when a Cessna Citation CJ2 on a planned ferry flight made a right turn and climbed to about 950 feet after takeoff before it began a rapid descent into the ground. The sole pilot aboard died. On May 22, a Citation S550 was destroyed when it crashed on an approach near San Diego. The pilot and five passengers were killed. All three accidents occurred under Part 91.

Four accidents of non-U.S.-registered business jets took the lives of 15 in the first half, compared with a single crash that was fatal to two people in the same period of 2024. On Jan. 9, 2025, a privately operated, Brazilian-registered CitationJet CJ1+ overshot the runway on landing, broke up, and caught fire, resulting in the loss of the pilot's life. On January 29, a Venezuelan government-operated Citation S/II crashed shortly after takeoff, killing all three occupants.

Two pilots and four passengers died on January 31, when a chartered Mexico-registered Learjet 55 air ambulance crashed shortly after takeoff from a Philadelphia airport on a planned flight to Mexico. In addition to the six fatalities aboard the twinjet, one person on the ground was killed. On June 3, a Venezuela-registered Citation I crashed in the mountains after taking off from Caracas, killing all five aboard.

Five fatal accidents of U.S.-registered business turboprops resulted in 18 deaths in the first half, compared with seven deaths in four accidents in the same period last year. Meanwhile, half of the 40 fatalities from six accidents involving non-N-numbered business turboprops in the first six months included the 20 who died when their chartered Ugandan-registered Beech 1900D crashed in South Sudan.

Vertical Safety Drift

(**Source:** Leah Murphy, FAA Safety Team Representative, FAA Safety Briefing Magazine, July 1, 2025)

Historically, helicopter operations have developed a reputation for being high-risk with limited safety intervention. While these operations are complex by nature and typically offer limited margins for error, the United States Helicopter Safety Team (USHST) has identified safety enhancements that, when implemented, can avoid hazardous outcomes.

In the air tour industry, safety is paramount, but there are often challenges caused by high workload, time pressures, and public expectations. Implementing a safety management system (SMS) in these operations offers significant benefits. An effective SMS goes beyond compliance; it creates a proactive safety culture where hazards are continuously identified, analyzed, and mitigated.

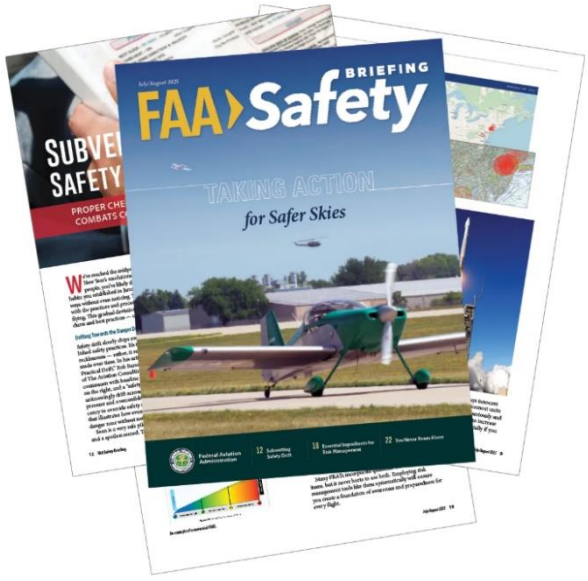
For air tour operators, instituting an SMS helps standardize risk assessment procedures, reinforces accountability, and ensures that safety is not left to individual discretion alone. It encourages front-line pilots to report concerns without fear of reprisal and gives management the tools to track and **respond to emerging trends** before they lead to incidents. For example, routine use of preflight risk assessment forms can flag when operational pressures are influencing go/no-go decisions, or when pilots are routinely accepting marginal weather.

Even in well-intentioned operations, a phenomenon called safety **drift** can gradually erode safe practices. Safety drift occurs when unsafe behaviors, like stretching minimums or skipping steps, are repeated without immediate consequences and eventually become routine. Over time, this normalization of deviance puts crews at serious risk.

To combat safety drift, helicopter operators should emphasize scenario-based training. **Unlike traditional training that focuses on rote procedures**, scenario-based training immerses pilots in realistic scenarios, encouraging active decision-making and judgment. Simulation is a key part of this effort. Simulators allow pilots to experience mistakes safely, learn from them, and rehearse better responses. Pilots can be put in realistic operational situations that provide pilots opportunities to practice skills or scenarios otherwise too risky to perform in the helicopter. Performing emergency procedures in a simulator, such as low altitude auto-rotations, night vision goggle operations in low illumination, and unintended flight into instrument meteorological conditions, gives the pilot and instructor a safe environment to learn and respond. Scenario-based learning helps pilots build cognitive tools to make sound decisions in high-stress environments.

One of the most critical aspects of flight operations is the go/no-go decision, where internal ambition, external pressure, or mission urgency can cause even experienced pilots to stretch safety limits. When safety drift creeps in, these decisions become increasingly risky and harder to recognize as flawed. Through repetitive training on how to assess weather, aircraft performance, and operational limitations, pilots build the confidence to say “no” when needed, even if it’s inconvenient or unpopular. A conservative mindset does not mean flying less; it means flying smarter, and with a greater margin of safety.

When combined with the structured support of an SMS, these lessons become institutionalized rather than optional. The result is a healthier safety culture where every go/no-go call is treated with the care and gravity it deserves.



This article was originally published in the July/August 2025 issue of FAA Safety Briefing magazine.
https://www.faa.gov/safety_briefing

Learn More

- Overview of SMS
- AC 120–92D, Safety Management Systems for Aviation Service Providers
- Master Your Mission in a Sim First Video (The Rotorcraft Collective)
- Just Say No! Video (The Rotorcraft Collective)

Leah Murphy is a dual-rated flight instructor and helicopter air ambulance pilot. She is also an FAA Safety Team Representative in Cleveland, Ohio.

SAFETY MANAGER'S CORNER

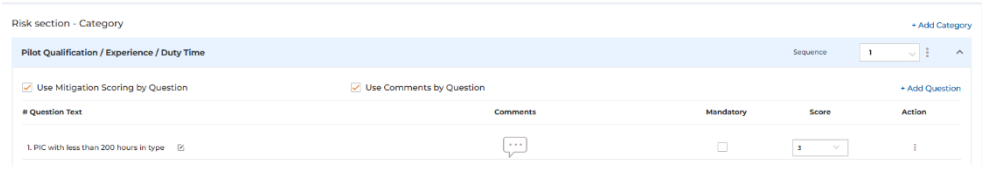
PRISM SMS: Flight Risk Analysis Tool (FRAT) – Add Comments

Many subscribers already use the Mitigation Scoring by Question that is available in the FRAT. The Mitigation Scoring by Question allows users to lower the risk score for each question and document how they were able to lower the risk through the Mitigation text area. This is a great way to document which specific risks you were able to lower and how you were able to lower the risk.

Just like with the Mitigation Scoring by Question, there are times when it would be nice to make a comment next to a specific question. Especially if the question score is zero and/or it is part of a checklist This is a new feature that PRISM just added to the FRAT in PRISM SMS.

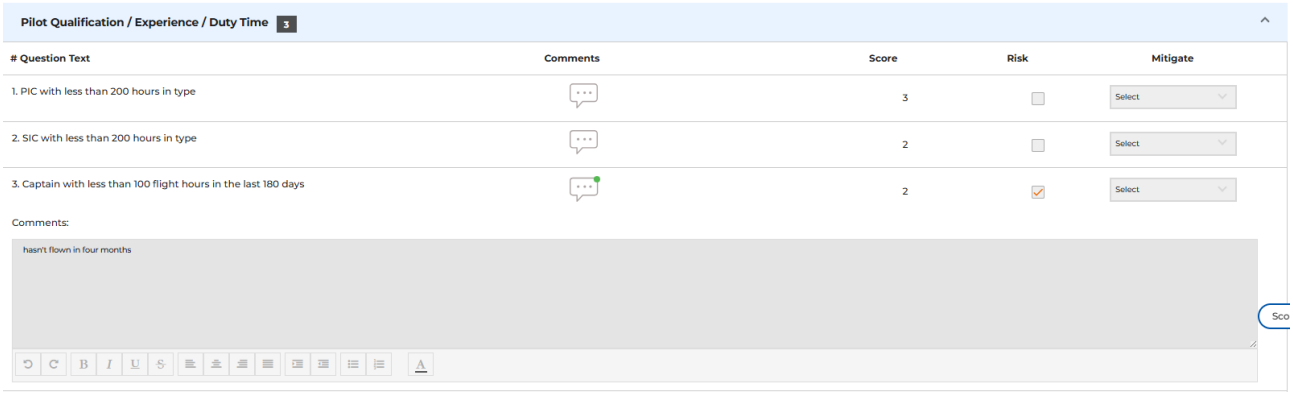
You can add this feature by following the steps below:

- Within the FRAT, go to Manage Templates.
- Clone the template that you want to add the comments to.
- Check the box for Use Comments by Question for each category that you want to add the option for comments to.
- Save the template.
    - Make sure to update the template name.



    - Also, recommended that you delete your previous template to avoid confusion and make sure everyone submits off of the new template.

If a comment is added to a FRAT report, there will be a green dot next to the comment icon and the Comments text area will be expanded (see image below).



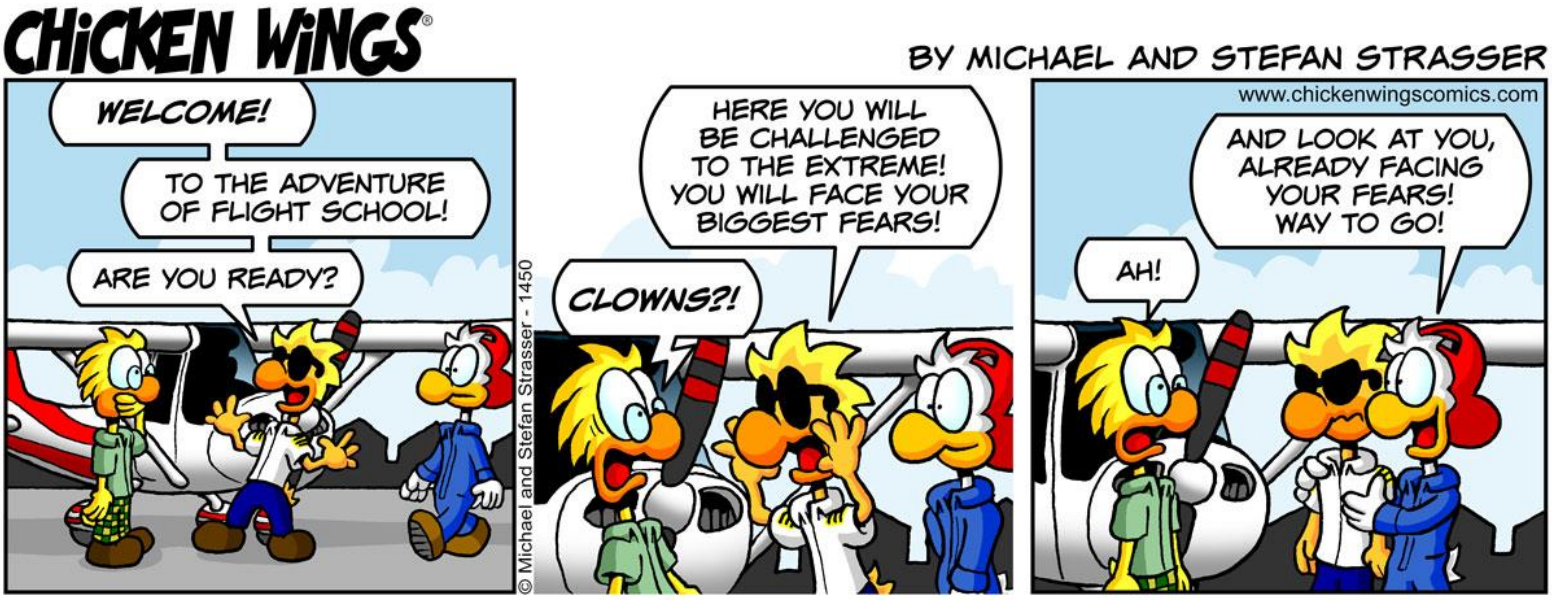
Quote of the Month

I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.

BY: Jimmy Dean

It can be said a plan is something to deviate from. None of us knows what the next day will bring, and the only thing ever under our own control is the way we react to emerging events and changes. Goals are stopping points along the journey, markers indicating achievements. Rarely is it ever a straight line from goal to goal, but rather a series of switchbacks taken to overcome bumps and hurdles. Understanding these inevitable realities and adjusting positively to them paves a path of appropriate attitude and projects strong leadership. Additionally, we can learn from these events and create procedures and processes that deal with them effectively and minimize any negative impact. Change is in the air, so make certain you don't suffocate.

CHiCKEN WiNGS



CONTACT LIST

Jenna Albrecht

Jenna.albrecht@prism.aero

Director, SMS Services

Wayne Ehlke

Wayne.Ehlke@prism.aero

Safety Analyst, SMS Services

ARGUS PRISM
A member of the SGS Group

www.argus.aero

#PRISMPREFERS

UPCOMING COURSES

Aug 12-14, 2025—PROS Course
Airline Safety Management System (SMS)
Virtual

Sept 15-19, 2025—PROS Course
ALAT Training
Denver, CO

Sept 16-17, 2025—PROS Course
Risk-Based IOSA Training
Virtual

Sept 16-18, 2025—PRISM Course
Safety Management System (SMS) Training
Denver, CO

Nov 11-13, 2025—PROS Course
Airline Safety Management System (SMS)
Virtual

Nov 18-19, 2025—PROS Course
Risk-Based IOSA Training
Virtual

Go to Upcoming Training Classes to register.

+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216
argus.sales@argus.aero