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A SAFETY ASSURANCE COMPONENT OF YOUR SMS

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DECEMBER 2025

OPERATIONS 7.

Flight Standards (PART 135)

Flight Standards:

"Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are universally recognized as basic to safe aviation operations. Effective crew coordination and crew performance, two central concepts of crew resource management (CRM), depend upon the crew's having a shared mental model of each task. That mental model, in turn, is founded on SOPs." (AC 120-71B) The operation has developed and maintained appropriate operating standards, and these standards are periodically reviewed and improved when necessary. Flight crews should demonstrate thorough knowledge and ability to perform normal, abnormal, and emergency procedures. Flight crews consistently display discipline in the use of company standardized procedures and checklists and emphasize safety in all phases of operation. Qualified personnel evaluate aircrews, analyze results, and provide feedback to improve training and performance deficiencies.

PART 135

SCALE OF 1-5

1 – Unsatisfactory
2 – Poor
3 – Meets Minimum Standards
4 – Excellent
5 – Best Practice

If your answer is not a 3 or better, you must record a finding that requires corrective action.

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1. During flight crew performance checks, are crewmembers evaluated for adherence to company standard operating procedures (SOPs)?

(FAR 135.293a[2]; IS-BAO 8.4.2, 13.1.1; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.11; ARGUS Platinum 7.1.2)

Appropriate emphasis should be placed on company standard operating procedures along with emergency procedures during line and proficiency checks. The check airman's attitude and techniques should reinforce the importance of constant standardization across the company's pilots as an essential component of crew coordination and safe operations.

1	2	3	4	5

2. Do pilots generally agree that mandatory callouts, sterile cockpit, and other accepted CRM methods are understood and consistently practiced throughout flight operations?

(FAR 135.330; IS-BAO 8.2.1 & 13.1.1; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.4, 4.1.11; ARGUS Platinum 5.5.2, 7.1.1[b])

Interviews with several pilots can informally determine if required callouts, sterile cockpit, and CRM practices are consistent throughout flight operations. The objective is validation of existing procedures and practices, not discovery of violation of SOPs by individuals. There is probably a root cause related to training or other systemic failure if these practices are not occurring as required.

1	2	3	4	5

3. Are separate SOPs developed and utilized for each aircraft type operated with two or more crew members?

(FAR 135.21; IS-BAO 13.1.1; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.11; ARGUS Platinum 7.1.1)

All flight crew members must be furnished with a current copy of the SOPs. The SOP must be a controlled document practicing revision and copy control. There should be a return receipt policy or other means to ensure that changes are understood and acknowledged by recipients. Each aircraft requiring two or more flight crew members should have its own standard operating procedures published as a part of or in a separately controlled document. The specific operating requirements associated with different aircraft should be clearly depicted and described in each SOP. A copy of the aircraft specific SOP should be carried onboard each aircraft.

1	2	3	4	5

4. Do SOPs, training manuals, and checklists contain consistent terminology throughout and is the terminology aligned with IAW standard industry practices?

(AC 120-71B)

For example, the term pilot monitoring (PM) is widely viewed as a better descriptor than pilot not flying (PNF). AC 120-71B acknowledges this and addresses other strategies to enhance crew monitoring and cross-checking with improved clarity, accuracy, and standardization in published SOPs.

1	2	3	4	5

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5. Do SOPs contain procedures and restrictions that enhance crew planning, coordination, and communication during airport surface operations?

(FAR 135.100; AC 120-74B; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.11)

Aircraft ground movement procedures must be focused on reducing the probability of incursions. SOPs should describe how before and during taxi both flight crew members monitor ATC clearances and follow the aircraft's movement on the airport. Any hold short instruction should be verbalized between the Captain and FO, and when approaching an active runway both pilots should ensure crossing clearance has been issued prior to crossing a hold short. Non-monitoring tasks such as FMS programming or company radio calls should not occur at critical movement times and locations. External communication and use of devices should also be addressed.

1	2	3	4	5

6. Do SOPs provide guidance on FMS inputs, cross-checks, and monitoring?

(AC 120-71B; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.4, 4.1.11)

Requirements for verification of navigation and communication entries should be clearly described and understood and practiced. For example, the method for verifying planned flight routing against the issued ATC clearance and the loaded FMS routing should be described in SOPs. Operating procedures may include the acronym technique CAMI for making flight system inputs (Confirm FMS inputs with the other pilot, Activate the input, Monitor mode annunciations, Intervene if necessary). The pilot monitoring should not perform FMS actions during critical periods.

1	2	3	4	5

7. Are company specific procedures/standards for the use of aircraft specific or specialized equipment adequately defined in published SOPs?

(FAR 135.180(b); AC 120-76E; IS-BAO 8.1.3.1[c], 13.1.1[a], 14.5.1; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.4, 4.1.16, 4.2.8; ARGUS Platinum 7.1.1, 7.10.2, 7.10.4, 7.10.5)

As technology has expanded, the use of systems such as Electronic Flight Bag's (EFB), Traffic Collision Alert System (TCAS), heads-up displays (HUD) and Enhanced Ground Proximity System (EGPWS) is commonplace. Not only should procedures exist to standardize the use of these various new systems, but all pilots should also receive training on those standards and the training should be documented. The AFM may contain procedures, but is it adequate for specific operational use?

1	2	3	4	5

8. Are the procedures for aircraft surface contamination adequate, current, and descriptive for each aircraft type, as required? Do all flight crew members (to include CSAs) have a complete understanding of the procedures?

(FAR 135.227 & 135.345(b)(6)(iv)(D); IS-BAO 8.1.3.1[b]ii, 8.1.4.1[b]iii, 8.1.4.2[c]iii, 13.3.2; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.4; ARGUS Platinum 5.2.2[b], 5.3.3[b], 7.2.9)

Current holdover tables must be utilized each winter season. Specific contamination procedures, to include ground deicing, must be in use. If the operation has significant differences in aircraft the procedures must contain the necessary specifics for each aircraft type. All flight crew members, including CSAs, must have a thorough understanding of these procedures.

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9. Are there procedures in place for flight crews to supervise ground operations?

(FAR 135.23; ARGUS Platinum 7.10.10)

Policies and procedures for flight crews to supervise aircraft ground handling personnel helps ensure proper servicing and operation of vehicles near an aircraft. Standardization is especially critical for this risk; aircraft left unattended during servicing and other ground activities frequently experience improper servicing or damage.

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10. Do standard operating procedures contain descriptions to prevent crews from practicing simulated emergency or abnormal situations in flight while passengers are onboard?

(IS-BAO 8.1.2; ARGUS Platinum 5.2.8)

Training and other currency requirements could influence flight crews to simulate or practice emergency or abnormal situations during flight when passengers are carried. Clear descriptions and restrictions on these simulations contained in operating standards provide essential guidance and prevent compromising situations. Verify the descriptions do not create any ambiguity regarding the restrictions contained.

1	2	3	4	5

11. Are there standard procedures for conducting passenger safety briefings? Do these briefing procedures allow for passenger limitations?

(FAR 135.117; AC 121-24E; IS-BAO 13.8.1; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.8; ARGUS Platinum 7.8.1 & 7.8.2)

A passenger safety briefing must be provided to all passengers before each flight. When the typical safety briefing is insufficient for a passenger because of that passenger's physical, sensory or comprehension limitations, or because that passenger is responsible for the care of another person onboard the aircraft, the pilot-in-command shall ensure that the passenger is given an individual safety briefing that meets his or her individual needs.

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12. Do the operating procedures contain a detailed description of pilot flight planning requirements?

(FAR 91.103, IS-BAO 13.2; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.10, 4.1.17; ARGUS Platinum 7.2)

During the flight-planning process, procedures require flight crews to familiarize themselves with specifics like the airport's noise abatement procedures, current NOTAMS, alternate airport requirements, special use airports' procedures, etc. Company requirements for other possible flight planning requirements like fueling, FRAT reports and security provide critical descriptions that facilitate preflight time management and standardization.

1	2	3	4	5

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13. Are there standardized procedures for the use of checklists covering normal, abnormal, and emergency procedures?

(FAR 135.83; IS-BAO 13.1.2; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.11; ARGUS Platinum 7.1.1[b], 7.1.2)

The operator shall ensure that checklists are made available to all crew members and that flight crews comply with best practices for checklist execution and that every crewmember utilize these checklists according to design in the performance of their assigned duties. Descriptions of checklist usage must provide clear and sensible guidance for the crew members. Crew member input into changes indicates use of and engagement with the checklists' usage. TCH Checklists can be used directly, or operator specific checklists can be established for each aircraft type operated and updated according to the current version of the TCH Checklists or AFM. If operator specific checklists are created, then the checklists should include a revision date and a reference to the version of the TCH Checklists or AFM used for its development.

1	2	3	4	5

14. Are there specific SOPs for international operations?

(IS-BAO 13.1.1, 13.2.1.3, 13.2.1.4; NBAA Management Guide 4.2: 4.2.4, 4.2.11; ARGUS Platinum 7.14)

If international operations are conducted then there needs to be established standard operating procedures (SOPs) for international operations to ensure aircrews are familiar with the requirements, rules, regulations and procedures for conducting operations in international airspace and any sovereign airspaces in which they operate. The International Operations SOP (IOSOP) must be a controlled document and properly maintained. A copy of the IOSOP should be provided to all crew members and carried onboard the aircraft for all international operations. The IOSOP should include instructions for operations in North Atlantic Minimum Navigation Performance Specification (NAT MNPS), if approved. Flight crews need to be trained in the use of the International Operations SOP.

1	2	3	4	5

15. Do the flight standards program effectively interface with training requirements and planning? When significant change is planned, are flight standards reviewed?

(FAR 135.293, 135.329; IS-BAO 8.1.3.1[c]; NBAA Management Guide 4.1.4, 4.1.11; ARGUS Platinum 5.2.3[a])

In small operations it might be difficult to separate training from standards; however, crew performance can only be effective if standards and training are completely aligned. If standards are modified, training must reflect the modification and ensure it is incorporated into existing plans and requirements. If significant change such as acquiring new aircraft types is planned, SOP review and development must align with training requirements.

1	2	3	4	5

16. Are crew member deficiencies and unintentional violations of a standard reported via an established method for determination of root cause and corrective action?

(IS-BAO 3.2; NBAA Management Guide 1.4.1, 1.4.2; ARGUS Platinum 1.2.1[d], 1.6.5, 1.6.7-1.6.8)

The assumption of personnel fault must not be automatic; errors are most often caused by underlying organizational weaknesses. There should be a method in place to monitor, document, and set corrective action strategies that remedy deficiencies, and not create individual blame based on errors. If poor habit patterns exist, they can be contagious; an effort must be made to stop poor practices in the cockpit before they supplant the standard. Determination if the cause is isolated or systemic is crucial.

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