

Overcoming Obstacles to implementing SMS

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*Responsible traffic.
Courage and co-operation.*

The purpose of the paper

- The purpose of the paper is to examine the obstacles to implementing safety management systems
- The paper discusses solutions for overcoming those obstacles
- Four modes of transport: aviation, maritime, rail and road



Safety Management System - SMS

- In order to ensure an appropriate level of safety, the safety critical organisations have implemented different types of safety management systems
- SMS is a systematic approach to managing safety, including the necessary organisational structures, accountabilities, policies and procedures. (ICAO, 2013).



Difficulties and problems found in implementing safety management system

- Considerable difficulties and problems have been reported in the implementation of the safety management systems.
- Incidents are not reported completely,
- Poor employee participation,
- The rules and procedures are not followed in daily operations as required



Conflicting cultural approaches

- Several studies have indicated that the difficulties and problems have originated from the specific cultural features of an organisation or an occupation.
- The cultural features can become either an enabler or a barrier for implementation of the safety management system

Different cultures

- Safety-related attitudes and practices are strongly influenced by different cultures such as
 - National cultures
 - Occupational cultures
 - Industry cultures
 - Company cultures
 - Regulators' cultures



Basic assumptions

- There can be good and bad safety cultures, related to an organisation's basic assumptions, which support or hinder safety oriented performance
- There is no single truth about what kind of safety culture would be the best in a particular organisational context.
- Instead of prescribing and regulating a safety culture, organisations and regulators should carefully consider the basic assumptions that could be cultural enablers and cultural barriers for the organisation in implementing safety management systems.

Basic assumptions should be taken into account

- Basic assumptions are difficult to change
- To avoid that specific basic assumptions become a barrier for implementing safety management systems, the employees' experience and expertise should be employed more intensively in the implementation work.
- A key enabler for safety improvement would be to involve all organisational levels in the identification, discussion and implementation of potential safety issues.
 - Safety culture cannot be changed or influenced directly; it can only be tried to be understood, in order to achieve favourable changes (Antonsen, 2009)

Transformation of transport industry

- Liberalisation of transportation markets
- Industry structures will be fragmented which will raise new organisational boundaries.
- Fragmentation will increase coordination problems between the operators and thus cause extra challenges for the implementation of safety management systems.

Co-operation between operators and transport modes

- No company can manage implementing the safety management system properly using only its own resources.
- Co-operation between companies and between all transport modes is needed
- Regulatory agencies should provide support for the co-operation

Thank you!

