

# Connections

As a young man, I dreamed of being the pilot who saves the day with his spectacular airmanship, the controller with the brilliant flight assist or the mechanic who discovers a hidden defect and saves hundreds of lives. In those days, we never talked about systems; safety was all about the individual or the latest safety technology.

But our industry has grown up, and we now understand, more than ever, the importance of systems. I've outgrown the idea of the spectacular individual save and realize that the best shot at improving safety today is to plug a few gaps by connecting people and systems together. That is why I want to talk about the importance of connections.

There are many important connections in our industry, but this month I am going to focus on the connection between the regulator and the operator.

A safety management system (SMS) deals with critical connections between operators, management systems and production systems, but it doesn't deal with the new relationship that must exist between the regulator and the operator. That new relationship is one of the major motivations behind the creation of the new International Civil Aviation Organization Standards and Guidance material.

Under those standards, which are now in effect, it is not good enough just to say, "My airline has an SMS." The regulator and the airline have to be able to stand together and talk about how their systems connect from the regulator, through management, to the operation. I was responsible for those standards when I was with ICAO, so I can tell you firsthand that was the intent. It is a change for all of us and a big opportunity for lasting progress. Those standards can be found at [www.icao.int/anb/safetyManagement/Documents.html](http://www.icao.int/anb/safetyManagement/Documents.html).

It doesn't do much good to talk about a new system of connections if you don't have a plan to get there. That is what the ICAO/Industry Global Aviation Safety Roadmap is about. You can read more about the Roadmap in this issue of *AeroSafety World* (see page 28). Let me tell you about the philosophy that drove its creation.

A large cross section of the aviation industry realized that progress in terms of safety systems and connections depends on all of us working together. So we wrote a plan that shows how to systematically develop implementation strategies for regions, operators and governments in a way that finally will bring together all the pieces and forge lasting connections that will serve safety for decades.

Not only did this broad cross section of industry devote considerable time and resources to the creation of this plan, they actually committed to follow it. It will become the guiding document that ICAO and the aviation industry refer to when safety improvements are contemplated. The first priorities for the industry will be those investments and activities that support the coordinated development of safety systems around the world, as outlined in this plan. This is a big step. Historic competitors and groups with diverse interests have put aside old differences to make real commitments to act as one. They are doing this to create the connections that will define our future.



A large, white, handwritten signature of William R. Voss, written in a cursive style.

William R. Voss  
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