Scoring Points for Safety

BY MARION C. BLAKEY

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With the sporting community riveted to this summer's World Cup soccer action in Germany, one thing is clear: No matter what country you are from, a goal is a goal.

It is the same with aviation. There is only one common tongue spoken here, and it is called safety.

Aviation safety is a shared responsibility. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has developed many productive relationships over the years with a wide variety of groups, and one of the most successful relationships has been with Flight Safety Foundation.

I like to think of the Foundation as one of the sentinels of the skies. Its influence can be found on nearly every major global safety initiative in the last decade, including the use of flight data recorders and in-flight collision warning systems.

That's not all. The Foundation has taken a leading role in evaluating and recommending safety improvements for a considerable number of operators, including some of the largest aviation organizations in the world.

These successes are a testament to the Foundation's mission — to emphasize safety at every turn. And it has been in practice since the Foundation first opened its doors nearly six decades ago. There's no telling how many lives have been saved by its work.

If we're to continue to reduce the risks of accidents, we have to determine where the risks lie and then go about eliminating, mitigating or managing them before an accident happens. Data acquisition and analysis are critical to this endeavor.

The aviation community has widely accepted and supported the concept of Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS) as the next safety frontier.

This fundamental program offers an effective way to further improve upon aviation's remarkable safety record. The beauty of ASIAS is that it transitions the safety community from the forensic approach of studying accidents to the more proactive diagnostic approach.

In the United States, we're developing VASIS, the Voluntary Aviation Safety Information System. VASIS aggregates Flight Operational Quality Assurance (FOQA) data and Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) data from several airlines to help us figure out where the safety threats are. Once we know where to look, we can analyze the problems, design a solution and then share it with all our stakeholders.

We all agree that the objective and subjective data we gather need to be shared and integrated. Without that, we aren't able to see national, fleet or geographic trends. That's where huge advances in safety will come.

It is obvious to everyone that we need to move to a place where everyone's data can be de-identified and aggregated.

Of course, no talk of aviation safety would be complete without mentioning ADS-B, or Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Broadcast.

Known to many as the next-generation ATC transponder, ADS-B allows pilots in the cockpit and air traffic controllers on the ground to "see" aircraft traffic with much more precision than before.

When fully developed, the system will provide reliable, accurate, real-time information about aviation traffic. ADS-B systems can further enhance safety through features such as automatic traffic callouts or warnings of an imminent runway incursion.

The benefits are clear. ADS-B will take us to even higher heights of safety.

The FAA and Flight Safety Foundation have made tremendous headway in the world of aviation safety. But I am even more excited by what the future holds for our partnership.

Let me thank our friends at the Foundation for the opportunity to appear in this inaugural issue of *Aviation Safety World*. When it comes to making our skies that much safer, you are winners in my book. Score one for aviation. ●