



OPS-021

Safety Management Systems

Standard
Version 2023.1 (DRAFT)
June 2023





1 Background

A Safety Management System (SMS) is a systematic approach to managing safety. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) mandates SMS for some operations.

AFAC contracts specify that Contractors must maintain a SMS that meets the requirements of this standard.

This NAFC standard:

- Summarises the minimum requirements of a Safety Management System according to CASA.
- Empowers Members to assess the suitability and effectiveness of SMS of Contractors against a defined standard.
- Ensures all Contractors are subject to the same standards and conditions relating to the management of safety in their contracted aerial operations.

AFAC is committed to continuous improvement in aerial firefighting safety. SMSs are an important risk mitigation for Contractors and are a driver of future capability.

This standard does not supersede any legislative requirements on Contractors in relation to SMSs. Contractors must at all times comply with Australian Civil Aviation legislation.

2 Criteria

Contractors must maintain an aviation SMS that aligns with CASA requirements and includes, as a minimum, the following matters:

- a) a statement of the Contractor's safety policy and objectives, including details of the following:
 - i) the Contractor's commitment to and responsibility for safety;
 - ii) the safety accountabilities of managers (including key personnel);
 - iii) the appointment of safety management personnel;
 - iv) coordination of an emergency response plan;
 - v) safety management system documentation;
- b) a safety risk management process, including:
 - i) hazard identification processes; and
 - ii) safety risk assessment and mitigation processes;
- c) a safety assurance system, including details of processes for:
 - i) safety performance monitoring and measurement; and
 - ii) management of change; and
 - iii) continuous improvement of the safety management system;
- d) a safety training and promotion system, including details of the following:
 - i) safety management system training and education;
 - ii) safety management system safety communication.



3 Implementation

NAFC recommends that Contractors refer to Australian Civil Aviation legislation and CASA guidance in the development, implementation, operation, and ongoing continuous improvement of their SMS, such as [Resource kit to develop your Safety Management System | Civil Aviation Safety Authority \(casa.gov.au\)](#) and [acceptable-means-compliance-guidance-material-part-138.pdf](#)

If required to have an SMS by the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR), NAFC requires Contractors comply with the timeframes detailed in CASA Instrument EX87/21: [CASA EX87/21 – Flight Operations Regulations – SMS, HFP&NTS and T&C Systems – Supplementary Exemptions and Directions Instrument 2021 \(legislation.gov.au\)](#)

If exempted by the CASR, NAFC requires that Contractors will have in place an operational SMS meeting the requirements of this standard by 1 December 2024.

4 Assessment

The intention of this standard is to ensure that Contractors maintain an SMS to the standards specified in Australian Civil Aviation legislation and CASA guidance. In accordance with CASA's role as the government body that regulates aviation safety in Australia, relevant Contractors will submit SMS's to CASA, and CASA (as opposed to NAFC) is legislatively responsible for reviewing and monitoring Contractors' compliance with SMS requirements.

Operators should expect that NAFC Member surveillance activity that occurs with regard to SMS's may be aligned with CASA SMS evaluation tools and guidance material, such as <https://www.casa.gov.au/safety-management-system-sms-evaluation-tool-and-guidance>

Contractors must upload a copy of their SMS to ARENA, for record keeping purposes. It is the Contractors' responsibility, and the expectation of NAFC and the Members, to ensure that they maintain any plans, manuals, systems and programs that are required by legislation, in accordance with the relevant legislation.