



## **Starr Companies: Mentoring program takes aviation clients to a higher RM level**

In the aviation industry, there is little room for error. As a result, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more critical issue than safety.

Granted, not every company connected to the aviation industry puts planes or helicopters in the air. But across the board, no industry must focus more on making sure safety is paramount for employees as well as customers and consumers.

With that in mind [Starr Aviation](#), the Atlanta-based division of Starr Indemnity & Liability Company ([starrcompanies.com](#)), recently launched a one-of-a-kind Safety Manager Mentoring Program for its clients – at no additional cost.

Administered by Starr Aviation's Safety and Loss Control unit, the Safety Manager Mentoring Program utilizes a Certified Safety Professional (CSP) from Starr Aviation (there are three on the team) to assist an insured's safety manager. Designed to identify and fill in knowledge gaps to help develop an effective Safety Management System, the tailored program entails an orientation, on-site training or webinars and self-study capabilities for Starr Aviation customers.

"The goal of our Safety & Loss Control Department is to provide practical solutions that address the specific safety concerns and needs of our clients," said Bill Eason, President of Starr Aviation. "We take a non-traditional approach to safety and loss control, and this is a great example of that type of out-of-the-box thinking."

Eason stressed that with the program Starr Aviation does not tell its clients how to run their safety departments or give them a long list of recommendations of issues or problems that need to be corrected. Instead, the main concept and philosophy is to find areas insureds are working on or would like to improve.

"With that information from clients, we roll up our sleeves and help them," Eason said. "We believe it is also an important differentiator for us in the aviation insurance marketplace."

Eason credits Greg Freeman, Starr Aviation's Vice President of Safety and Loss Control, for the innovation of using a mentoring program. Freeman, a 20-year aviation industry risk management expert who handles the program's day-to-day aspects, contributes an impressive track record and depth of experience to insureds that opt for the mentoring program.

"Greg has built a very strong team with all members having the CSP designation, and that is not an easy

designation to achieve,” Eason said.

Freeman went to Eason several months ago to discuss some emerging safety issues in the aviation business. Primarily, those issues focused on the Safety Management System (SMS) effort, which is becoming a standard throughout the aviation industry worldwide. According to the Federal Aviation Administration website, SMS is recognized by the Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and Civil Aviation Authorities (CAA) and product/service providers as the next step in the evolution of safety in aviation.

Simply defined, SMS integrates modern safety risk management and safety assurance concepts into repeatable, proactive systems. SMS emphasizes safety management as a fundamental business process to be considered in the same manner as other aspects of business management, according to the FAA.

After years of field visits, Freeman realized that some insureds truly needed a one-on-one mentoring program, rather than a one-off class or seminar.

“There were quite a number of clients who requested help in fully understanding what was required of them as part of an SMS plan,” Freeman said. “We created our mentoring program in response to that need.”

Freeman says that in his experience and in the program so far, insureds that benefit most from mentoring are those who most care about safety and already are very proficient at delivering a safer workplace and product for customers.

Even so, he said, no matter how good they might be, safety managers can always learn something new.

Most of all Freeman said, the Starr Safety and Loss Control team worked to create a program that represents value in loss control for insureds, taking safety to a higher level. Plus, Freeman’s visits with insureds determined that some, not all, of Starr Aviation’s insureds didn’t even have qualified safety managers on hand. The job typically had been relegated to a pilot or mechanic, rather than a safety professional with solid SMS knowledge and experience.

“Insureds often can’t afford to send someone to a formal course, so we determined it was something we could do for them one-on-one,” he said. “We are all Certified Safety Professionals, and all three of us have extensive aviation experience. So why not help insureds directly by offering a mentoring approach?”

Freeman explained that the mentoring program has three phases, including an initial assessment/orientation (done by phone or in person), the actual one-on-one training (the “nuts and bolts” of the program), and finally a self-study phase whereby the Starr team provides participants with online resources and guidance in formulating an SMS.

Freeman says the key messages in an SMS as designated by the FAA, include:

- A safety policy statement that outlines the company’s commitment to safety.
- Safety must be a core value, driven by senior management.
- A company must have measureable safety goals.
- A company must strive to create a positive “safety culture,” meaning a focus on what people

believe about safety and the steps that must be taken to create such a culture.

“After we do the initial assessment, we look for any potential gaps in an SMS strategy and help the insured learn to close those gaps on their own,” Freeman said.

Other SMS components involve how to establish authority, responsibility and accountability for safety; how to get employees more involved (it’s not just for management) and helping participants learn about regulatory factors related to an SMS, mainly compliance with FAA, OSHA and other federal agency guidelines.

“We also talk about safety training for employees,” Freeman said. “Some of the other critical SMS components we focus on are; hazard identification and risk management strategies, accident investigation and emergency response planning.”

Starr Aviation unveiled the mentoring program in mid-February at the Helicopter Association International’s HELI-EXPO in Dallas, and so far, Eason said, the reviews - both at the show and in the time since - have been extremely positive.

“The feedback we have received indicated to us that we are the only company that comes out to help clients work through SMS concerns and strategies,” Eason said. “We don’t charge for it and it has the potential to save loss dollars.

“For us it more than pays for itself,” he said. “And for our insureds, it represents a tremendous value and benefit.”

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