Why SMS?

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is committed to enabling one of the nation's safest modes of travel to remain safe for today's riders and generations to come. Yet the industry remains vulnerable to catastrophic events, the loss of experienced personnel, and the pressure to do more with less.

To help a safe industry become even safer, FTA intends to adopt Safety Management Systems (SMS) as our new safety regulatory framework. With a focus on organization-wide safety policy, formal methods for identifying hazards, controlling their potential consequences, continually assessing safety risk, and promoting an effective employee safety reporting system, SMS provides a new structure for addressing expectations specified by Congress in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21).

SMS is an agency-wide, collaborative approach that ensures the necessary organizational structures, accountabilities, policies and procedures are in place to direct and control resources to optimally manage safety. **SMS is scalable to organizations of any size and flexible enough to be effective in all transit environments, from the largest urban to the smallest rural transit system.**

The basic premise of SMS is a simple one. Every public transportation agency that assumes responsibility for the safety of its employees and passengers should have a system in place to identify risks and act upon them. For a small bus transit agency, that safety management system is going to be fairly straightforward and less complex to implement than in a large transit agency. SMS provides a framework

focused on common-sense, cost-effective safety requirements that are established collaboratively with state and industry partners. It adds value without adding unreasonable costs, and ensures that resources are applied directly to the most critical risks. Because SMS is based on the principle that "one size does not fit all," SMS enables transit agencies of all sizes to determine their own individual safety risks and target their resources on those risks.

As we move forward together, we have the opportunity to broaden our conversation regarding safety risk in the public transportation industry. SMS generates a context with the necessary interfaces for candid discussions to focus local, state and Federal attention on those elements and aspects of transit operations most critical to safe public transportation.

Adopting SMS further deepens the industry's commitment to the safety of its passengers and employees. Moreover, **SMS offers the promise of a stronger culture for labor and management to work together to solve safety problems.** SMS promotes greater communication, discussion and understanding of safety issues and concerns through training, enhanced work practices, and improved labor-management partnerships so that risk are jointly identified, prioritized and controlled. I look forward to working with you on integrating SMS principles into public transportation.

Peter Rogoff

U.S. Department *of* Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

safety
management
systems

One size does not fit all...
SMS fits ALL sizes.

1. Safety management systems (SMS) in brief

SMS is about strategically applying resources to risk. It is based on ensuring that a transit agency has the necessary organizational infrastructure in place to support **decision-making** at all levels regarding the assignment of **resources.** This is essential to effectively **manage safety risks** during the delivery of service. The elements of an organizational infrastructure include:
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Strong executive safety leadership
- Formal safety accountabilities and communication
- Effective policies and procedures
- Active employee involvement

2. SMS is scalable and flexible
- SMS activities, and the processes necessary to support them, are scalable to the size of the transit agency and the complexity of the service delivery model

3. Key SMS activities
- Collecting and analyzing data and information to proactively identify hazards
- Taking actions to mitigate the risk associated with the potential consequences of hazards
- Ongoing monitoring of risk through a system of safety controls
- Using data to support allocation of resources that promote and support safety performance

4. Key features of SMS
- **Accountability** for the management of safety at the highest level of the transit agency
- **Collaboration** between management and labor to ensure agreement on safety risk priorities
- Structured and strategic **decision making** for safety resource allocation
- **Enhanced service safety performance** through proactive safety risk analyses
- Increased **confidence in safety risk controls** through safety assurance

- Partnership and **knowledge sharing** between public transportation agencies, state agencies, and the FTA
- A positive safety culture that supports **safety communication and reporting**

5. SMS Components
SMS is comprised of four components:
- **Safety Policy** – safety commitment and accountability, safety roles and responsibilities, safety resource allocation to support safety performance targets
- **Safety Risk Management** – safety hazard identification, safety risk-based analysis and implementation of safety risk controls
- **Safety Assurance** – monitoring of safety risk controls to ensure they are achieving their intended objective while assessing the need for new risk control strategies
- **Safety Promotion** – achieving the safety mission through clear safety communication channels and safety training programs

6. Benefits of SMS
- An SMS helps agencies see the whole picture when it comes to risk. The pedestrian fatality in a crosswalk may be avoided when drivers report near misses, supervisors proactively investigate the operating environment, and management supports organizational accountability rather than individual blame. This leads to changes in procedures and training that result in reduced risk for pedestrians.

7. The role of senior management in SMS
- Regardless of the size, mode, or operating characteristics of a transit agency, the success of SMS depends on the extent to which senior management understands and accepts its role of accountability in promoting safety and managing transit agency safety programs.
- Ensuring employee partnership and participation in all safety matters.

8. SMS and our current safety structure
- SMS builds on existing transit agency resources, both human and technical, and refocuses agency activities to more effectively utilize tools and existing talent and expertise within the transit agency.
- SMS ensures that safety decision-making is integrated into the management processes that drive the organization.

9. Security, emergency preparedness and SMS
- When considering overall risk to passengers, employees and the transit agency, SMS ensures that transit management integrates security and emergency preparedness information into its assessments of risk.
- SMS helps management and employees understand their **total safety risk exposure** and apply resources strategically and effectively.

10. SMS and safety culture
- SMS facilitates a shift in the attitudes regarding safety within a transit agency, by changing both leadership and employee perceptions of safety and its importance in day-to-day activities.
- SMS places a strong emphasis on safety training and safety communication to guarantee that the entire transit agency fully understands SMS policies and procedures, and supports an effective safety-reporting environment within all levels of the workforce.
- SMS promotes an environment where management and employees work together to identify risks and act together to control them.