



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2024

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PRESS RELEASE

Vertical Aviation International Ready to Help Members Meet SMS Mandate

VAI's SMS programs can assist members with compliance.

The FAA announced Monday, Apr. 22, that companies conducting air tours, air ambulance operations, charters, and commuter flights must [implement a safety management system \(SMS\) program](#) within 36 months of the effective date of the rule. This mandate, aimed at reducing accidents and enhancing safety, also applies to aircraft manufacturers, ensuring a comprehensive approach to aviation safety. The rule requires that applicable operators and manufacturers implement “a structured, repeatable, systematic approach to proactively identify hazards and manage safety risk.”

In anticipation of this rule, Vertical Aviation International (VAI) leaned forward, developing programs to make it as easy as possible for operator members to implement SMS before it became a requirement. Those programs remain in place to assist all affected operator members with developing and implementing their SMS programs.

The FAA is applying [14 CFR Part 5](#) to all Part 135 operators, and air tour operators with a letter of agreement (LOA) issued under [14 CFR 91.147](#). However, in situations where a single pilot is the sole person responsible for the safe operation of the aircraft, the rule will not apply.

Under the [SMS final rule](#), operators have three years to submit a declaration of compliance. The FAA will require new Part 91.147 and Part 135 operators, including any potential advanced air mobility operators, to submit a statement of SMS compliance as part of the certification process. Additionally, the FAA stated that current aircraft manufacturers (Part 21 certificate holders) be required to develop and submit an implementation plan within six months of the final rule effective date, and 36 months from the effective date to implement their SMS.

In [comments provided by VAI during the rulemaking process](#), the association voiced support for the rule as long as the requirements were clearly laid out and operators were given sufficient time to implement their SMS programs.

“We have long supported the use of SMS programs as a means of improving safety throughout our industry,” says James Viola, VAI president and CEO. “The FAA has not been alone in

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promoting SMS as a required safety program. The National Transportation Safety Board routinely included SMS in its list of most wanted improvements in transportation safety. Globally, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has [recommended SMS mandates](#) since 1997.”

Congress first ordered SMS for aircraft manufacturers in 2020. “This helped to make us aware of the potential for inclusion of Part 91 and Part 135 operators in the mandate,” says Chris Hill, VAI senior director of safety. “Consequently, VAI began planning for the requirement quite some time ago. We started working with industry partners to provide our members with scalable SMS programs, coaching and assessment tools, and training at substantial discounts. In some cases, the discounts on the programs will even cover the cost of VAI membership.”

As part of its extensive library of [Safety Resources](#), VAI provides members with [a variety of options for SMS compliance](#) that companies can select based on their operational needs, including near-turnkey programs by four SMS industry leaders:

- The Air Charter Safety Foundation (ASCF) offers a simple yet customizable SMS for very small to large flight departments, fixed bases of operations (FBOs), and maintenance and repair organizations (MROs)
- The Aircraft Electronics Association (AEA) provides SMS software and training solutions exclusively for MROs
- Baldwin Safety & Compliance offers the Baldwin SMS Product Suite, which includes options for small, medium-sized, and large businesses
- WYVERN Ltd. provides SMS software, a fast-start assessment, ongoing coaching, and upgrade options for small to large organizations.

Visit rotor.org/SMS to learn more about these solutions for assessing, tracking, and resolving safety threats and for verifying compliance with regulations and best practices.

“This new mandate may be concerning to operators who have yet to implement an SMS,” adds Viola. “VAI is here to help our members navigate the evolving regulatory landscape, and we will soon provide them with additional information on how to achieve compliance with this rule. And members should contact me at president@verticalavi.org at any time if you need help with SMS implementation or other regulatory issues.”

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About Vertical Aviation International (VAI):

Vertical Aviation International (VAI) is the world's leading membership association dedicated to the vertical aviation industry, which encompasses all aircraft capable of vertical or short takeoff and landing. By fueling industry growth through connection, advocacy, safety, education, and support for its members' success, VAI strives to leverage the power of vertical flight to strengthen communities worldwide. The association welcomes all facets of the vertical aviation industry, including manufacturers, operators, suppliers and vendors, pilots and maintenance technicians, and other aviation professionals. For more information about VAI, please visit rotor.org/newbrand.

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