US Forest Service

Oversight of Public Aircraft Operations

Background

The US Forest Service uses aircraft for a wide variety of missions, including personnel transport, research, forest health, law enforcement, aerial photography, infrared detection, and fire suppression.

Background

Forest Service fire suppression includes delivery of smokejumpers, rappellers, firefighters, cargo and aerial delivery of fire retardant and water.

This involves approximately 350 aircraft and 75,000 flight hours on average annually. 95% of these operational hours are procured via contract services.

Aerial Firefighting Missions

Oversight of Public Aircraft Operations

- USFS uses the baseline standards of 14 CFR as a foundation for all missions.
- Our standards are built on the foundation that the FAA sets for civil aircraft and civil operations.

Oversight of Public Aircraft Operations

- USFS standards are not instead of or in competition with FAA standards.

- The USFS determines if a contracted aircraft and personnel meets the standards for USFS special mission operations.

The USFS uses aircraft that may be excess military aircraft.

These are generally certificated in restricted category in most cases.

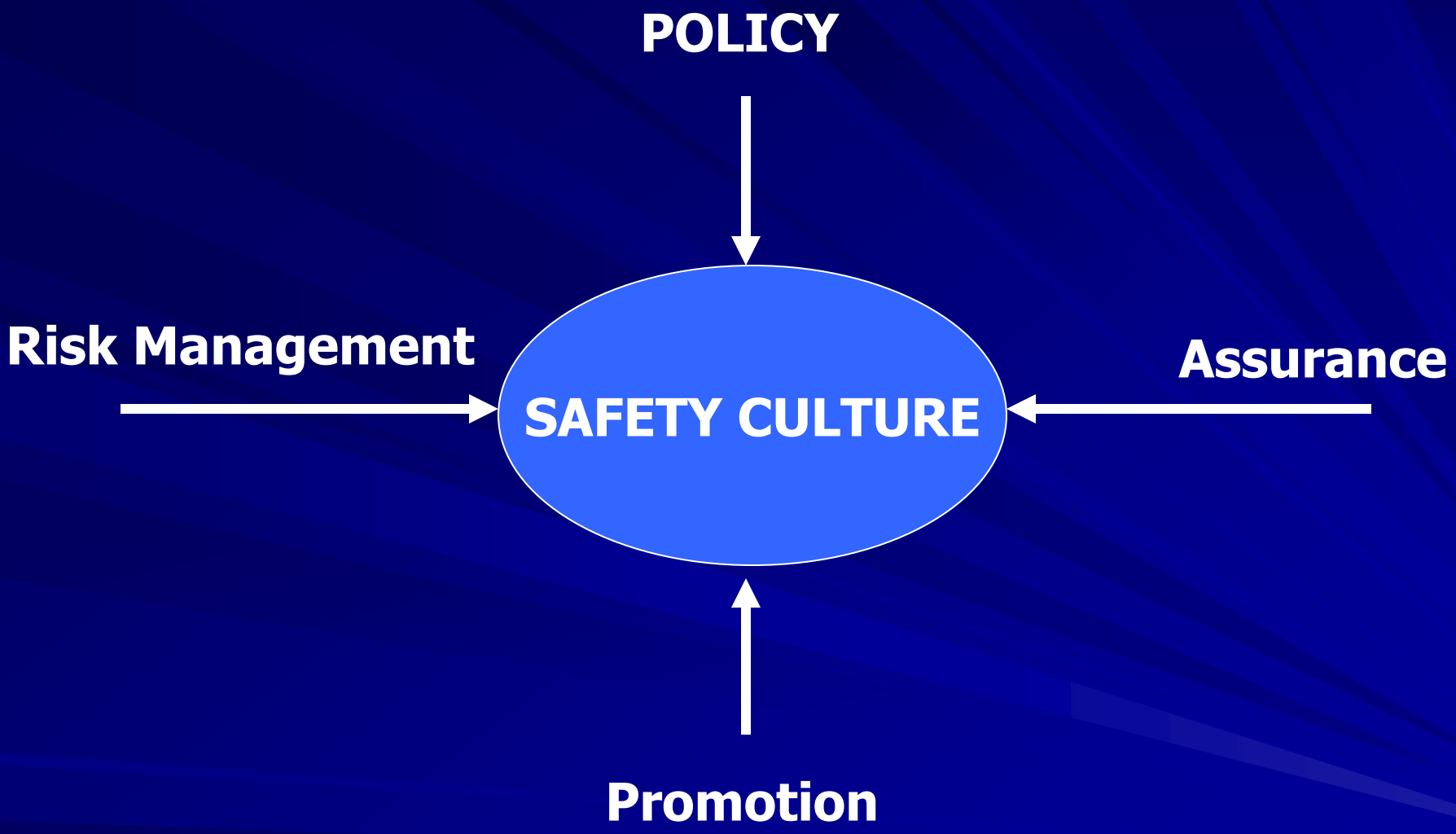
Oversight of Public Aircraft Operations

- The standards for personnel, additional equipment, aircraft configuration, inspections or documentation are determined by the USFS to meet our statutory authority, policy and contract specifications.
- Contract service providers are audited in order to assure that contract specifications are being met.

Airworthiness Assurance and Oversight of Public Aircraft Operations

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- The goal of SMS is to create a positive safety culture where participants continually challenge the processes, the culture and the systems to identify weaknesses and where improvements can be made.


POLICY
Risk Management
SAFETY CULTURE
Assurance
Promotion

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Actions taken since 2008:

- Added 11 inspectors for maintenance and pilot QA audits
- Completed strategic risk assessments for type 1 helos, aerial supervision, aerial firefighting and rappel missions.

SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- Developed and Implemented agency wide SMS Guide
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive maintenance audit checklist.
- Worked with NASA engineers to develop load monitoring systems and implement continuous airworthiness standards for air tankers.

Quality Assurance and Oversight Matrix

1) Data Dissemination

From Contract Eval, mine data from the awarded bids. Such as Bid weight, Weight and Balance, Perf Charts and Load Calc. Communicate these to Inspectors and CORs

2) Pre or Post proposal validation

Holistic view of the contractor. Validate what was illustrated in the Bid Package, witness aircraft weighing

3) Carding

Aircraft Carding may be done at either time.

4) Pre-Work Insp

5) Safety Management System Maintenance Audits

Programmed during MAP, This happens no matter the activity level. **Nationally implemented, Contract Focused**

6) ASTAT

Additional Oversight During Periods of High Use. **Regionally implemented, Operations Focused**

7) Audit one fourth of Awarded EU Vendors each year during the offseason

Nationally implemented, Program Management Focused

Mandatory Availability Period

CONCLUSION

- There are few missions that cannot be conducted in the USFS that will not meet FAR's.
- SMS processes are designed to mitigate gaps between civil standards and public use.
- The USFS depends upon the support of the FAA and the NTSB to accomplish its mission.


QUESTIONS ?
FIRE