Army Aviation Safety

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Why doesn't the Army standardize Safety? Standardization means adherence to proven procedures to ensure consistency and repeatability. We use standardization in Army Aviation to preserve resources – lives and aircraft. At first glance, it seems that every aspect of Army Aviation's daily business is standardized. We adhere to many standards of flight and are governed by many regulations that ensure safety of flight. There are standard annual flight hour requirements, there are checklists that standardize the start-up and shut-down of every Army aircraft, and there are standardized steps to follow in the event of an aircraft emergency. As strange as it may seem, while standardization may have widespread application in Army Aviation as noted in the short list of previous examples, the business of Army Aviation Safety is not. Some of the issues are small and maybe insignificant, others are downright irritating as they reflect a significant and unnecessary latitude between every major aviation organization to accomplish the same task. As a safety community we need to standardize - the old adage of "in my last unit" or "but here our SOP states…" should not be an answer when we discuss safety. Safety should be standardized as any other aspect of the Army Aviation profession.

We rely heavily on locally made products made by the unit "spreadsheet guru" who understands the inner workings of macros and tables. But what happens when that one skilled individual leaves the unit? Since the procedures for creating the product were never documented, the product often becomes outdated and the cycle of re-inventing a suitable product to serve the same purpose starts over again. As a member of the Aviation Safety Officer (ASO) List Server, I have seen multiple requests for a "good" spreadsheet to track the unit's fighter management program or a universally acceptable class sign-in roster. During installation inspections we use locally produced forms to demonstrate documented training and attendance. As the records inspectors see many different versions of sign-in rosters and forms, they normally find issues with the format or the information contained on the form itself. Although many of these comments are well-intended to improve the units efficiency, each new inspection bring new inspectors with new and well-intended comments.

Fighter management tracking is an important function intended to account for the crew member's duty day. Tracking methodology varies significantly from unit to unit and appears to be in large part a function of the safety officer's knowledge of Microsoft Excel. The fighter management tracker is never set up the same. In a single example of many variations, a forward medical support team is typically assigned to a different task force when deployed with each working under a fighter management tracker different from the others. One task force might track on a non-secure internet protocol router, another on the secure internet protocol router, while others might use a local drive on the unit's Miltope computer. Some units will only track flight hours and duty hours and others will use it as a semi-annual and annual flight hour tracker. As long as the duty day and flight hours are tracked, our many varied systems seem to meet the requirements; however, standardizing how and where Army Aviation tracks fighter management would greatly reduce confusion across the force and minimize the potential loss of information.

How the records are maintained should also be standardized. Requiring Soldiers to carry a paper product that tracks all of this information from unit to unit is an option, but when a tool such as the Digital Training Management System (DTMS) is available, why risk the chance of important records being misplaced or lost while in transit from unit to unit? Why waste the trees? Standardized documentation of every Soldier's completed training could be made available to the commander and training managers. Not only could mandatory training be tracked, but an additional advantage would be the ability to identify special skills annotated in the training record that support essential additional duties within the unit. For example, a DTMS review of a new Soldier's

records show that he has completed the Occupational Safety and Health Administration approved Hazardous Communication, Hazardous Material/ Waste (HAZMAT) and Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response training in an earlier assignment, allowing his skills to benefit the receiving unit.

The training record could potentially include the Army Abbreviated Ground Accident and Abbreviated Aviation Accident Reports under reference numbers available only to the command team. The rationale is that this information is key to allowing the commander to create a viable safety training plan or creating a unit accident trend analysis. Each Command Team has a "High Risk" tracker, that track Soldiers' who are "High Risk", due to a pending divorce or financial issues, why wouldn't they need to know about a previous accident that the Soldier was involved?

Another opportunity to standardize practices within Army Aviation is with aviation risk assessment analysis. Interestingly, the Army provides a standardized Ground Risk Assessment Tool to assist in the identification, assessment, and control of hazards. But we, in Army Aviation, have not managed to come to terms with this level of standardization with the risk assessment worksheet (RAW). The RAW format changes with every major unit/installation and the assessment varies from assigning numeric values to assigning colors to designate risk values. The inconsistency across Army Aviation is confusing and consistently open to

discussion as to whether a particular form completely answers the mail as a risk assessment analysis tool during major aviation unit inspections. Of all of the forms used within Army Aviation, why has this form not been standardized? Each area of responsibility has unique areas of concern that require additional risk assessment considerations but these should not necessarily change the overall format or method of completing the risk assessment worksheet. The additional considerations could simply be added to an Army standardized form as a local addendum.

Using the Ground Risk Assessment Tool as a guideline, the aviation risk assessment could become a standardized form, decreasing the chance of inaccurate or incorrect information. As an online/ electronic tool, individual aircrew information could be pulled from the Centralized Aviation Flight Records System as an accurate reflection of crew flight hours. Additionally, incorporating the fighter management/crew endurance program into the risk assessment would also create an all-inclusive form for providing a detailed overview for a mission briefer or a final mission approval authority. Eventually, other data which has direct correlation to aviation risk assessment such as illumination tables, weather brief information, and the DD 175-1 Flight Plan. From a different, albeit unpleasant, afterthought, - in the event of an incident/accident all of this information could become a bundled data point for an investigation team.

There are many ways safety professionals can standardized the safety community. Incorporating these few changes could be the catalyst in standardizing the Army Safety Program. Creating a Soldier Safety Training Record, standardizing the fighter management tracker, and creating and standardizing an Aviation Risk Assessment form will enable the Safety Officer to do their job more efficiently in creating a "Safety Culture" in the Army.

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Acronym Reference

ASO - aviation safety officer	**HAZMAT** - hazardous material/waste
DTMS- Digital Training Management System	**RAW** - risk assessment worksheet