

New SMS Promotes Safety Mindset, Focus, Across Navy, Marine Corps

NORFOLK, Va. – The Department of the Navy has released its new Safety Management System (SMS), signaling significant changes toward a safety focus and mindset that embraces critical self-assessment and self-correction from the deckplate on up, Naval Safety Command Safety Promotions-Public Affairs announced Sept. 14.

The Naval Safety Command is tasked with implementing the Navy Safety and Occupational Health Manual, OPNAV-M 5100.23 CH-2, which follows the release of the command's updated mission, functions and tasks (MFT), enhancing its authorities and assessment roles. The SMS applies to every Sailor, Marine and civilian employee and to all activities across the naval enterprise.

“This new SMS marks a fundamental shift in how the Safety Command will guide the Navy's efforts to identify and communicate risk aligning with the CNO's 'Get Real, Get Better' initiative,” said Safety Command Commander, Rear Adm. Christopher M. Engdahl. “The SMS takes a systems approach to managing risk and assuring effective risk controls and accountability are in place.”

Key takeaways from the new publication expound upon the four desired outcomes for a unified and resilient SMS:

1. Safe Place. Ensure a safe work environment and that emergency protocols and systems are operable and regularly tested.
2. Safe People. Personnel across all levels are trained, qualified and comply with established procedures and are

risk aware and fit to work (general health and well-being).

3. Safe Property/Materiel. People have the right tools, equipment and infrastructure that are safe to operate and operate safely.
4. Safe Processes/Procedures. Current standard operating procedures, emergency and safety procedures and maintenance standards are accessible.

The new SMS is a formal, systems-based approach to managing risk and assuring the effectiveness of risk controls to meet these desired outcomes. The SMS provides a framework for risk resilience focusing on the behaviors of self-awareness, self-assessment, self-correction and continual learning. The new SMS was developed by benchmarking the best practices of high-performing organizations in both government and commercial sectors.

“We must all adopt a learning mindset,” said Engdahl. “A high level of rigor, discipline and transparency are critical. Leaders must share what they learn from not only best practices but also actions contrary to procedures or processes to help others succeed, find the best solution, and adjust plans and processes as needed.

“Our Navy needs everyone to be active in mitigating risks to their operational environment and that of their fellow Sailors and Marines,” he said.