

IAM



***The Union
The Future***

**Submission to the
Standing Committee on
Transport, Infrastructure and
Communities
on Aviation Safety**

Who we are

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) is the largest union in the air transport sector in Canada and in North America. The IAM represents over 50,000 members across Canada, of which 20,000 work in the aviation, aerospace and air transportation sector. We represent over 500,000 members in North America.

In the airport security service sector, we represent the majority of the pre-board screening officers in Canada which includes the Pacific region and in both airports in Toronto, providing safety and security screening to the travelling public on behalf of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) and Transport Canada (TC) as well as many security services within and along the perimeter of airports in Canada. In the ground handling service sector, we represent workers across Canada at Air Canada, Air Transat, Landmark Aviation, Swissport, Air Labrador, TBH, Toronto Ground Airport Services (TGAS), Airport Operations Support Services (AOSS), Smarte Carte, and Aircraft Services International Group (ASIG) now taken over by Menzies Aviation, to name a few.

We welcome the opportunity to present the views of Canadian air transport workers to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (TRAN).

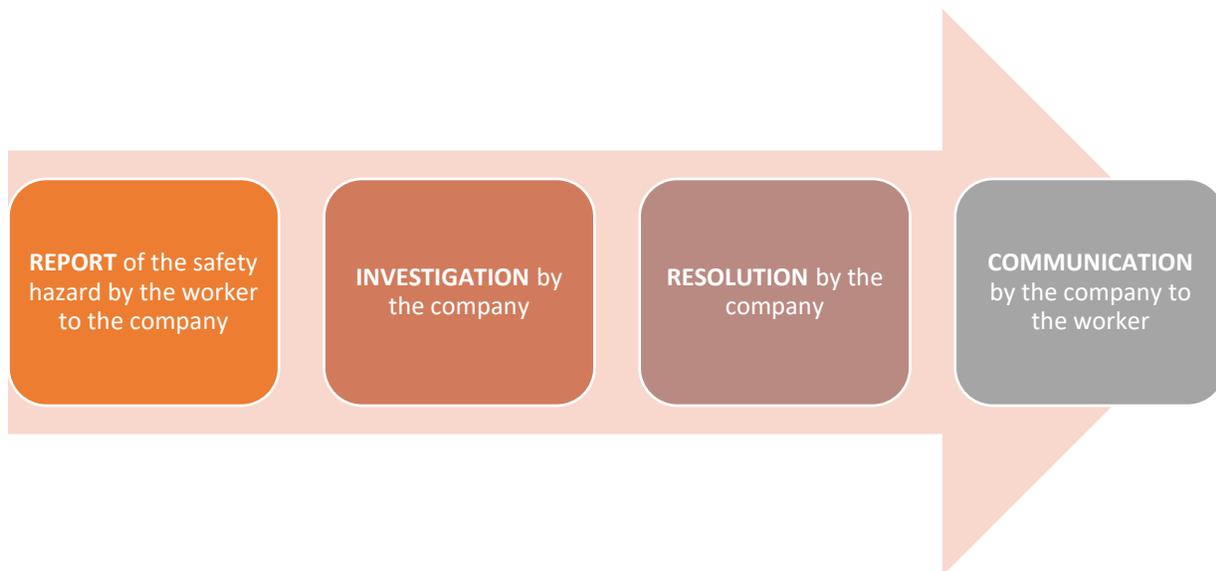
This submission presents the views of IAM members. It raises aviation safety concerns on Safety Management Systems (SMS) under the control of TC and airport pre-board screening safety concerns under the control of CATSA & TC

1. Safety Management Systems (SMS)

As pointed out by [Transport Canada](#), "Safety management systems (SMS) help companies identify safety risks before they become bigger problems. Transport Canada regulations require the aviation industry to put safety management systems in place as an extra layer of protection to help save lives."

When first implemented, the IAM was critical of SMS. We thought that TC would simply approve a company's system and leave the monitoring and control to internal corporate procedures. Without constant and effective public regulation, corporations would push the limits of safe operations at growing risk to the workers and traveling public.

TC's role is to ensure that companies comply with regulations, through the critical role of inspectors. The company's role is to provide a safe environment to workers and follow the SMS process in place. In case of a safety hazard, SMS come into play as follows:



Unfortunately, too many problems often occur during this process: no efficient tracking or follow up of a safety hazard being reported takes place. The process often ends at step two, giving the impression that there was no investigation conducted by the company. Finally, there appears to be a lack of resolutions and communications implemented by the company.

Recommendation #1: Compliance inspections need to be conducted by TC inspectors on a more regular basis.

The introduction of SMS has undermined the current whistleblower process, which affords some protection to employees reporting safety hazards. Our members have told us they do not feel confident with the process in many provinces, such as British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec but we found no issues in Alberta. In that province, TC inspectors in the past went to the workplace and the SMS process was reviewed in an efficient manner and their concerns raised were addressed.

Recommendation #2: TC should create a better atmosphere for workers to report safety hazards. (Step 1 of the SMS process).

Recommendation #3: TC should facilitate a confidential survey in the eight major Canadian airports among workers: Toronto Pearson International, Vancouver International, Montréal–Pierre Elliott Trudeau International, Calgary International, Edmonton International, Ottawa Macdonald–Cartier International, Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International and Halifax Stanfield International. The goal of the survey is to find out if there are any concerns or fears in place preventing workers from using the SMS process.

2. Airport Pre-Board Screening Concerns

In reviewing airport pre-board screening operations within our organization, many issues were raised by our members.

Health and safety committees in Toronto have reported the test results for their equipment, [Health Canada Safety Code 29](#) for the x-ray machines and have yet to receive a reply, any feedback or any follow up to have safety hazards corrected. The committees need that feedback, but it seems that CATSA is not taking their findings seriously. Further in British Columbia, the IAM has asked for the test results done by Nav Canada who services and maintains the equipment. So far they have not been successful either. This obviously could have an impact on how machines work and impact the safety of workers along with passengers being processed.

Recommendation #4: CATSA address poor test results on equipment as they are responsible for these machines and discuss this matter with service providers in order to find a solution and improve the quality of equipment and ensuring the safety of airports is maintained.

Health and safety committees have also reported that the airport authority personnel constantly interfere with the screening process. For example, the required space between bins going through the x-ray machine is supposed to be 1-2 feet apart. But the bins are pushed closer together by the airport authority personnel who want a faster flow of passengers going through the security lines during busy travel periods. This initiative was started by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) and the Vancouver Airport Authority (VAA) to address long passenger lineups at security points during peak travel times. This situation interferes with the inspection process. Further, when bins are pushed close together, the x-ray machine sensors reject the bin spacing by reversing the belt until the proper spacing is achieved. Customer service seems to override safety in this situation. In British Columbia, CATSA has now advised the IAM that the practice will stop soon, but it is still ongoing.

Recommendation #5: CATSA should address the issue of space required between bins going through x-ray machines and the constant interference by Airport authority personnel and clarify with these authorities that they are interfering with safety and CATSA procedures and address the real problem of long line-ups in a different manner.

The amount of dust in the security screening work areas and within the machines as well is another concern. It causes health and safety issues for the pre-board screening officers, flight crew and passengers using the system across the country. In British Columbia, a partial solution has been put in place to address this situation. A cleaning company has been hired to clean the work area but not the machines because they are not allowed to tamper with security equipment. Part of the problem has been solved but the machines are still very dirty and many passengers have been complaining about it. In Toronto, both problems have yet to be addressed by the GTAA.

Recommendation #6: CATSA and the service providers need to work together to address the dust issue in security screening areas on a weekly basis.

Our airport pre-board screening officers are facing a new problem across the country, namely the increase of abuse and violence from passengers toward them while performing their job. This has been increasing steadily and it appears that the pre-board screening officers are bearing more of these abuses as their employers, local airport authorities and CATSA seem to be pushing disciplinary action even though they are just trying to perform their jobs properly in the face of long passenger line-ups. The authorities seem to want to take the passenger's side of events by letting them go along to their flights swiftly so as not to receive written complaints. This puts the security screening officers in an uncomfortable position and could possibly lead to improper searches to take place due to threats and consequences.

Recommendation #7: use signage for the public advertising the fact it is illegal to verbally or physically threaten pre-board screening officers like is done at the London Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom in the Customs clearance area. This is very clearly posted with warnings stating it is illegal and subject to prosecution.

Finally, a similar concern is the threat of physical harm and or verbal attacks on screening officers by employees going through [non-passenger screening \(NPS\)](#). Airport employees who use a vehicle have to go through screening, also called the non-passenger screening vehicle (NPSV). There have been incidents reported to IAM representatives during NPSV checks. Another screening procedure called non-passenger screening terminal (NPST) applies to employees as well. Non-passengers go through NPST as they enter the airport secure area to go to their workplace. Many times they become agitated when the NPST system process automatically selects them for a random search. IAM representatives have been advised of incidents and have reported them to CATSA. CATSA should take these reported and documented incidents seriously and resolve this issue for the airport pre-board screening officers. Airport security could be compromised otherwise.

Recommendation #8: use signage for all non-passengers going through NPS advertising the fact it is illegal to verbally or physically harm pre-board screening officers like done at the London Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom. This is very clearly posted with warnings stating it is illegal and subject to prosecution.

Recommendations

In order for SMS to be an effective monitoring system by TC, the IAM makes the following recommendations:

- Recommendation #1: Compliance inspections need to be conducted by TC inspectors on a more regular basis.
- Recommendation #2: TC should create a better atmosphere for workers to report safety hazards. (Step 1 of the SMS process).
- Recommendation #3: TC conduct a confidential survey in the eight major Canadian airports among workers: Toronto Pearson International, Vancouver International, Montréal–Pierre Elliott Trudeau International, Calgary International, Edmonton International, Ottawa Macdonald–Cartier International, Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International and Halifax Stanfield International. The goal of the survey is to find out if there are any concerns or fears preventing workers from using the SMS process.

In order for CATSA to provide a safe work environment to airport pre-board screening officers, the IAM makes the following recommendations:

- Recommendation #4: CATSA address poor test results on equipment as they are responsible for these machines and discuss this matter with service providers in order to find a solution and improve the quality of equipment and ensuring the safety of airports is maintained.
- Recommendation #5: CATSA should address the issue of space required between bins going through x-ray machines and clarify with airport authorities that their initiative interferes with safety and address the real problem of long line-ups in a different manner.
- Recommendation #6: CATSA and the service providers need to work together to address the dust issue in security screening areas on a weekly basis.
- Recommendation #7: use signage for the public to advertise the fact it is illegal to verbally or physically harm pre-board screening officers, like done at the London Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom. This is very clearly posted with warnings stating it is illegal and subject to prosecution.
- Recommendation #8: use signage for all non-passengers going through NPS advertising the fact it is illegal to verbally or physically harm pre-board screening officers like done at the London Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom. This is very clearly posted with warnings stating it is illegal and subject to prosecution.