



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization
North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

INFORMATION PAPER

NACC/DCA/11 — IP/31
09/06/23

Eleventh North American, Central American and Caribbean Directors of Civil Aviation Meeting (NACC/DCA/11)

Varadero, Cuba, 28-30 June 2023

Agenda Item 4: **NAM/CAR Regional Safety/Air Navigation Implementation** 4.1 **Safety Implementation Matters**

THE ACI APEX IN SAFETY PROGRAM

(Presented by ACI-LAC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Excellence (APEX) in Safety program has been assisting airports to identify safety gaps and vulnerabilities and supporting them in implementing national and international standards and best practices. APEX in safety was developed to help airports prepare for aerodrome certification. This paper presents how this program can assist states in improving operational safety across aerodromes in line with Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) objectives and priorities, especially on runway safety and aerodrome certification.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Airport Excellence Program (APEX) in Safety is ACI's response to the industry's call for action to improve aviation safety worldwide. It is designed to assist airports of all sizes to improve their level of safety and compliance with ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).
- 1.2 Since its formal inception in 2012, ACI has conducted more than ninety APEX in Safety reviews in all regions of the world, and 24 in the Latin America and Caribbean region.
- 1.3 Created as a voluntary program to help airports identify safety gaps and vulnerabilities and establish roadmaps for safety certification or improvement, APEX in Safety quickly became a unique methodology that enhances an airport's operational safety by promoting airport excellence through the sharing of industry best practices.

- 1.4 Key to the success of this program has been the deployment of the airport community to assist each other in driving safety improvements regardless of location, size, development or complexity. Through partnerships with members, key stakeholders such as ICAO and government organizations, including Civil Aviation Authorities (CAA), ACI has been able to respond to the challenge of improving safety. Because it is a peer review, not an audit, airports are candid about areas of concern and will actively seek advice on how they could improve. The value of the program lies in its scalability and that it can be tailored to any airport to meet the general needs of compliance with the ICAO annexes, as well as address specific concerns that individual airports may have.

2 DISCUSSION

General Objectives of the ACI APEX Program

- 2.1 For each review ACI assembles a team of experts provided by other member airports and regulators on a friendly basis, who are able to systematically review the safety components at an airport during a visit over a period of, generally, one week. ACI then prepares a series of recommendations, which the airport can then use to correct or improve its safety infrastructure and procedures. The APEX team remains available to the host airport throughout the airport's implementation process of the action plan.
- 2.2 Also, the APEX team reviews and provides guidance to streamline airfield certification processes and ASMS implementation, including assistance with SMS gap analysis. Specific objectives would include:
- Assistance with MSS operationalization.
 - Assistance in the Aerodrome Certification processes.

Supporting States in aerodrome certification and safety enhancement

- 2.3 The APEX in Safety program may assist airports to obtain or maintain aerodrome certification. With the agreement of the host airport, a review may also support the oversight functions of a CAA by allowing it to be an observer on an APEX mission and by other capacity building activities such as training and opportunities for discussion with CAA staff as required. The APEX in Safety program has been assisting ICAO in conducting certification assessments and workshops in the North American, Central American and Caribbean (NACC) and Latin America-Caribbean (LAC) Regions.

- 2.4 The objective of the visits is to bring in experienced personnel from other airports to share and conduct an independent assessment of the factors affecting safety at the participating airport and identify "best practices" that can contribute to the improvement of safety levels. The review is conducted in the field and according to the ICAO Audit Guide - Aerodromes, Air Routes and Ground Aids, as well as the ACI documents entitled "Best Practices in Safety Management" and "SMS Gap Analysis Tools"; and according to the participating airport's own established objectives.
- 2.5 As observers on an APEX review, State authority/CAA inspectors have provided valuable input through their expertise in oversight and regulatory functions. In return they have benefited by receiving experience on daily operational safety aspects of airports along with networking with experts from around the world. In a rapidly growing and changing industry risk mitigation needs to be constantly assessed and regulatory oversight and integration with industry best practices are valuable. Other potential benefits for CAA inspectors who take part in reviews may include:
- a) understanding airport operator's practical conditions and challenges during the certification process;
 - b) understanding of an airport operator's perspective on application of safety regulation with experts from around the world;
 - c) understanding airport operator application of a risk-based approach, including mitigation measures; and
 - d) participating in the challenges of implementing safety management systems (SMSs).

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 1 The APEX in Safety program provides effective support to airports. The peer review process has brought together the community of airports to increase international cooperation in all regions and has enhanced aerodrome safety consistent with the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) objectives.
- 3.2 Regional and international cooperation is the basis for an effective and comprehensive APEX in Safety review. The support of regulators is important in continuing the growth of the program as airports which have received a review have found that safety performance has improved when all stakeholders share experiences.
- 3.3 ACI, as a leader in the airport industry, prides itself on facilitating cooperative processes where each airport, by virtue of its unique characteristics of size, strengths and expertise, can contribute to the improvement of safety compliance and reduce/mitigate the risks of incidents at airports worldwide.

3.4 ACI and ICAO must continue their respective roles in facilitating and enhancing safety levels at Airports and States, and with this innovative program that goal will be achieved.

3.5 You are invited to:

a) take note of the progress achieved in ensuring aerodrome safety through the ACI APEX in Safety program.

b) invite States to support the ACI APEX in Safety program and encourage their national airport operators to participate; and

c) encourage States to see the benefits of APEX in Safety, providing peer to peer assistance to airports on operational safety management and facilitating compliance with regulations.

— END —