



NAVAL SAFETY COMMAND

SAFETY AWARENESS DISPATCH



SA 23-23

What is a Risk Registry and Why Do You Need One?

*At the deckplate level, a Safety Management System (SMS) boils down to
“If you see something, say something.”*



In SA 23-17, “What Is The SMS and Why Should You Care?” we tried to boil the SMS idea down to what matters at the deckplate level. Now that we’ve done that, we’re seeing some confusion at the supervisory level about what a “Risk Registry” is and how it fits into the SMS. We’ll take a stab at explaining it in words that we (*in the SA Division*) understand, so maybe you will too.

To get us all started on the same foot, here’s a quick rehash from the SMS dispatch 23-17

(available on the NAVSAFECOM website; link on pages 2-4): Each organization must have an SMS or Safety Management Plan (SMP) to properly identify, communicate, and account for the risks around them. The purpose of an SMS is to keep us from accidentally hurting ourselves and breaking our stuff. The bottom line to remember at the deckplate level is, **“If you see something, say something.”**

The “Risk Registry” part of an SMS/SMP is a step that comes into play for the supervisor(s)/leaders you “said something” to. In simple words, that next step is, **“And then write it down.”** To get to the desired outcome of the “4Ps” (Safe People, Places, Property/material, and Processes/procedures), everyone in the command or organization needs to have a collective awareness of the risks they face—especially our leaders! A Risk Registry in a command makes sure your commander knows about the risks and can address them (*fix them, or mitigate them while they “say something” [communicate] up the chain of command so the higher-level commander can fix them*). A Risk Registry helps your command and commander keep track of what the unfixed risks are, who’s doing what about them, and it gives a clear way to pass the risks up to the next commander in the chain who can do something about it.

*At the supervisory level, the SMS still boils down to the same thing, but it adds another step:
“If you see something, say something, **and write it down.**”
Congratulations. You have just begun a Risk Registry.*

What is a Risk Registry?

A Risk Registry is a tool that helps document, track, and share awareness of the risks in your command or organization and up the chain. There isn’t one standard form or way to list the risks. It can be whatever format your command or community needs it to be—everything from a Word file, Excel spreadsheet, or a SharePoint App—it just needs to be effective for your team to communicate and manage risk.

Why Create a Risk Registry?

To manage risks, we have to be aware of them. Creating a registry to record and track risks ensures your command **leaders know** and the higher **chain of command knows**. A Risk Registry allows a command or organization to manage risks effectively and efficiently by THINKING and creating a list of issues that could impact the mission, how to deal with those risks and **WHO** can fix them.

What is a Risk Registry and Why Do You Need One?

Speaking of “Who,” an important term in the Navy’s SMS is **Accountable Person**. The Accountable Person (AP)—generally the commander—is the one who “owns the risk” and is personally accountable to **fund/fix** the risk and has the authority and responsibility for the effective execution of the SMS/SMP. *Important point: If a leader/commander doesn’t have the ability to fund or fix the problem, that leader isn’t the AP.* He or she is obligated to forward the risk up the chain of command (and so on, at each level) until it gets to the AP. **Remember, you can’t “own” a risk if you can’t “fund or fix” it!** The AP owns the risks within their command and they cannot delegate this responsibility.

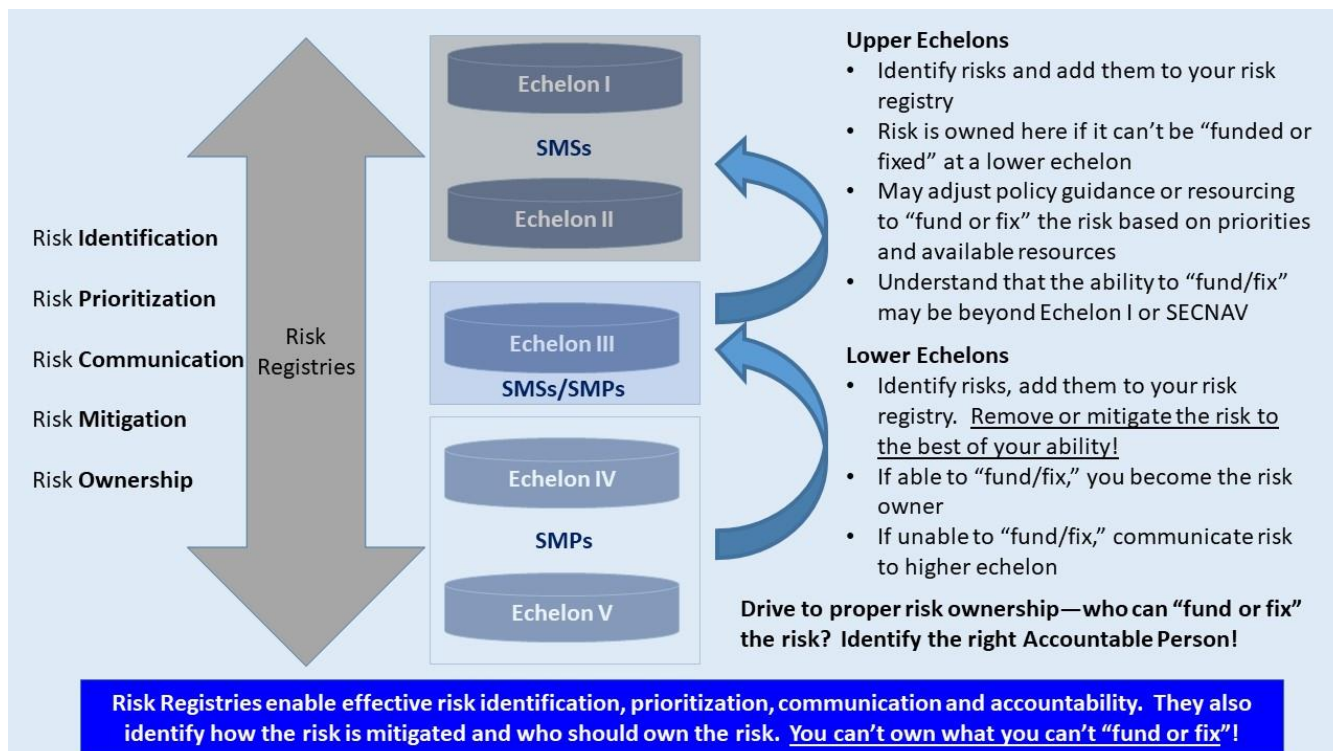
Does anyone remember the key point from Operational Risk Management about “Make risk decisions at the right level”? The “Accountable Person” in the SMS is the “right level.” So, if you see (or are told about) a risk/hazard, ask yourself, “Do I have the authority to fund or fix the risk?” If so, you are the AP for it. If not, write it down (*in other words, add it to the Risk Registry*) and send it to your next boss in the chain of command. Repeat the steps above at the next level, until it hits the AP.

At the Accountable Person level, the SMS still boils down to the same simple concepts, but it adds one more step:

“If you see something, say something, and write it down, and [if you’re the AP] do something about it.”

Now to “Get Real” about it

The below diagram highlights how Risk Registries help make risk management happen. Each command/organization, from the lowest to the highest, must have aligned Risk Registries so they can identify, prioritize, communicate, and account for risks. This is the “real world” part of risk management—there’s only so much money and time to go around. The Accountable Person at any level of command needs to know all the risks under his or her command authority, so they can figure out which ones are most important to prioritize for time and money to fix (and how to handle the ones left over). As the risk is elevated, the proper AP is identified as they are the only individual who can “fund or fix” the issue. Then the problem can get fixed! As we mentioned in SA 23-17, fixes are already happening under the new SMS. Sometimes, all it takes is making sure the Big Bosses KNOW about it! They can’t fix stuff if no one tells them about it. —If we “**Get Real**,” we can “**Get Better**.”



And remember, “Let’s be careful out there”

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Real-World Example: A squadron Commanding Officer faces a number of challenges and risks that impact his/her ability to meet mission requirements. The CO and his/her team identify challenges, including:

- The hangar door operating system is malfunctioning, requiring maintainers to improvise and manually push the doors open and closed with an aircraft tow tractor.

- The squadron has numerous fall-protection shortfalls needing material solutions.

- The command is manned to less than the operational requirement.

- The squadron has too few supervisors on the night shift.

The CO can't fund or fix all these risks at his/her level (*not the AP*). By using a Risk Registry, the CO can organize these and other risks in a single place/tool, analyze them, prioritize scarce resources against them, account for and communicate risks he/she can't fund/fix (*not the AP for*) to a higher authority, and develop mitigation plans to manage the residual risk (*the stuff that isn't fixed yet*).



How do I create a Risk Registry?

It's not as complicated as you'd think. A Risk Registry is mostly about **THINKING**. And a Risk Registry isn't a one-and-done document. It's something a command or organization **THINKS** about and updates regularly.

Once the "See something, say something, write it down..." process makes it to the commander's level, set a recurring, periodic time (e.g., quarterly or monthly) to have a team of your leaders sit down to **THINK** about the hazards and risks and update the Risk Registry. Communicate the updated Risk Registry up the chain of command so the next echelon can update their broader picture Risk Registry.

When you or your team are **THINKING** through the risks, a list of what to consider may sound a lot like the steps of Risk Management (which kind of makes sense). When you first start thinking and creating your Risk Registry, you may focus on actual safety risks (stuff that can cause a mishap, hurt our people, or break our stuff). But, as you get more into considering risks, you'll want to consider overall risks to your mission and ability to operate effectively, even if they aren't items that are directly causal to a mishap.

What should I THINK about when creating/updating a Risk Registry?

- Identify Risks: Make a list of all current risks (What can prevent me from accomplishing my mission? Risks to my "4Ps"?).

- Analyze Risks: How likely is it to occur and how bad would it be? (i.e., probability and impact of potential events or situations).

- Evaluate Risk: Assess and manage the probability and potential consequences, and rank them in priority of importance (at least rank the top few).

- Mitigate Risk: Reduce or eliminate risks in whatever ways you have the power and authority to do. Even if you can't fix them at your level (*not the AP*), how can you mitigate/minimize the risk? Remember, if you cannot eliminate the risk, you need to communicate that up the chain of command.

- Monitor Risk: Keep up with the Risk Registry. Monitoring allows commands/organizations to stay alert for any changes or new risks that show up. **Risk Registries require constant review/updates to be effective and not just another administrative burden!**

And remember, "Let's be careful out there"

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What are some good elements to include in a Risk Registry?

- Risk Category: What part of life/duty does the risk affect? (e.g., is it time, cost, personnel, training, resource, equipment, environment, etc.; is it operational, strategic, tactical, regulatory, etc.? Risk categories are different based on the organization and its mission, so each community will have to decide for themselves.
- Description: Self-explanatory. Make it easy for others to understand.
- Analysis: Process by which we assess and quantify risks based on probability (chance of happening) and severity (impact of event happening). Organizations make better decisions by identifying and weighing the risks associated with possible mitigations.
- Priority: Where does this risk fall out in importance? Is the risk high, medium, or low? Does the prioritization change as the mission changes? The priority will drive higher-level decisions on scarce funding and time.
- Response: What is your command's plan/mitigation strategy for dealing with the risk? This is the most important section of the Risk Registry and may require the most **THINKING**.
- Risk Ownership. Who, in your best judgment, owns the risk (*is the AP*)? If an individual or organization can't "fund or fix" the issue driving the risk, they don't own the risk. Even if your command or organization can't fund or fix it, your command will feel the effect of the risk and must still assess and mitigate it as best you can. Ensuring risks are properly identified and communicated to those who do own the risk is critical to effective risk management.

Key Takeaways

Without a Risk Registry, an SMS or SMP are just acronyms. A Risk Registry is a valuable tool that organizations—at all levels—must use to identify, communicate, and account for risks that can adversely affect readiness (*or hurt us*).

1. **Everyone must participate.** In order to create an effective Risk Registry, everyone in the organization—from the deckplate to Admirals and Generals—must do their part in the SMS process (*noted again in our simplified words in red below*). The higher up you are, the more important it is to be aware of the Risk Registry and to actively participate in developing and updating the tool. Have we identified all the risks? Have the risks been communicated to the person who can "fund or fix" the issue (accountability)? If the risk can't be removed, how are we as an organization managing the risk? **Risk management is a team sport!**
2. **Static equals ineffective.** Stuff changes. Commands/organizations must regularly review and update their Risk Registry, especially as we rotate through the stages of maintenance, training, deployment, sustainment, etc. If you only make your Risk Registry once, it's like saying, "I went to the dentist three years ago and he said I'm good." You probably aren't; you just haven't felt it yet.
3. **So, who owns this thing anyway?** If you can't "fund or fix" a risk, you don't own it. **Don't suffer in silence.** Risks require communication to the AP, who can effectively deal with them. Many risks we endure are there because the "owners" don't know the extent of the problem. If you aren't the AP, pass it up the chain. Help your Bosses help you.

***"If you see something, say something...and write it down,
and [if you're the AP] do something about it."***

For more on the SMS, check out the [Who We Are What We Do](#) page on our public website here: navalsafetycommand.navy.mil.

References:

Navy Safety and Occupational Health Manual, OPNAV M-5100 CH-2
Marine Corps Safety Management System, Marine Corps Order 5100.29C
Fleet Safety Management System, COMPACFLT/CUSFFC/CUSNAVEUR/AF 5100.9A

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