



Naval Safety Command Establishment Questions and Answers

Q1. Why change the name of the Naval Safety Center to Naval Safety Command?

A1. The name change reflects the continued emphasis that the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations place on safety. By elevating the organization to a command construct, NAVSAFECOM will have the authority to establish Echelon I safety and risk management policy and the ability to conduct formal, independent assurance functions from Echelon II through unit-level commands to evaluate risk control system and continual self-improvement. This reorganization will require a measured approach to enact sustained change and will evolve over time.

Q2. When will the change from Naval Safety Center to Naval Safety Command occur?

A2. The change from Naval Safety Center to Naval Safety Command is scheduled to occur on Feb. 4, 2022. This is an evolving process, and we are taking a pragmatic approach to ensure our mission, functions and tasks are updated and we map the process for establishing an effective safety management system and associated programs, policies, and organizational issues that factor into this change.

Q3. What will the organization's establishment as the Naval Safety Command initially entail?

A3. NAVSAFECOM will report directly to the Chief of Naval Operations and will serve as a special advisor to the Secretary of the Navy. A two-star admiral will lead the command. Under this reorganization, the command will have increased authority and will address fleet implementation and enforcement of non-nuclear standards and performance. The intent is to effectively identify and correct problems before they grow into larger systemic issues.

Q4. How will the new commander of the Naval Safety Command be chosen?

A4. The NAVSAFECOM commander will be a two-star admiral with prior experience managing complex command and control (C2) relationships and safety across all phases of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP). For example, the commander will be someone who has completed a tour as either a Carrier Strike Group Commander or Expeditionary Strike Group Commander. The NAVSAFECOM commander will serve as a special advisor to the Secretary of the Navy and report directly to the Chief of Naval Operations. Ultimately, the NAVSAFECOM commander will impart experience and lessons learned from NAVSAFECEN into any future flag positions.

Q5. What are some of the functions that the Naval Safety Command will have the authority to execute under its new mandate?

A5. NAVSAFECOM will now conduct assurance assessments of Echelon II and below organizations. In other words, the command will have the authority to inspect higher headquarters, evaluate their risk management certifications, inspections and assessment processes, and execute no-notice unit inspections. For example, NAVSAFECOM will establish Echelon I safety and risk management policy; conduct formal, independent assurance functions from Echelon II through unit-level commands to evaluate the risk control system and continual self-improvement; execute no-notice inspections and assessments; suspend specific activities, if required, until corrective actions are completed and risks appropriately mitigated as agreed to by NAVSAFECOM; and authority to access and collect data across the enterprise in pursuit of safety-related initiatives including operations, personnel, material, culture, and command climate data.

Q6. How will Naval Safety Command's ability to assess, evaluate, and audit compliance at the Type Command level improve risk management?

A6. As a force multiplier, NAVSAFECOM will build upon positive actions Fleet, Type, and Systems commanders take to enhance our layered defense (safety standards, expertise, and oversight), and increase enforcement and accountability of those layers in execution. Commanders will address barriers at their level or elevate with specificity, accountability, and transparency.

Historically, the Naval Safety Center's mission, functions and tasks (MF&T) gave the organization the responsibility for providing training, resources, doctrine, command assessments, data collection and analysis, feedback, and recommendations on the status and effectiveness of unit and command safety and risk management programs. However, that role did not come with the authority to audit higher headquarters (HHQ) and conduct no notice unit assessments nor the authority to enforce compliance with recommendations or corrective actions. With its new MF&T, the Naval Safety Command will be empowered to execute a regulatory function for the naval SMS, reinforcing full transparency and accountability to increase the effectiveness of risk management efforts across the enterprise.

Q7. What is a Safety Management System (SMS)?

A7. A Safety Management System (SMS) is a formal, top-down, organization-wide approach to manage risk and assure the effectiveness of risk controls. It includes systematic procedures, practices, and policies for risk management. An effective SMS also has assurance and regulatory processes built into it. Key enablers to an effective SMS include appropriate accountability for and communication of risk.

Q8: Why is an SMS needed?

A8: The naval enterprise needs a formal SMS to encourage learning, drive problem identification and solving to result in continual process improvement and provide for assurance and controls at every level. It will support readiness, productivity and mission accomplishment. Bottom line: an SMS supports readiness production.

Q9. How did you choose these courses of action to address risk management failures?

A9. As we learned from the recently released report on the USS Bonhomme Richard fire, key causal factors included a lack of oversight by commanders, deficiencies in training, readiness and ship's material conditions, as well as lack of familiarity with requirements and procedural non-compliance at multiple levels of command. Corporate best practices prove that these causal factors can be effectively addressed through a functional and effective SMS. Of these, appropriate oversight is critical to identifying and addressing issues such as these before a major fire or mishap occurs.

Although reorganizing the Naval Safety Center is critical to enable future success, leaders across the enterprise need to fully own and accept their roles within the SMS.

Q10. Did you look at other organizations to inform your decision?

A10. During the review and analysis of our current safety structure, we consulted with defense and corporate organizations such as our own Navy nuclear enterprise, the Royal Navy, Chevron, Delta, and Maersk Line, Ltd., to discuss best practices, key performance indicators, structure, benchmarks, requirements, and policies.

The top-performing industry organizations all maintain an effective centrally managed, all-encompassing hierarchy responsible for training, safety communications, inspection practices, auditing, reporting, and enforcing compliance. The Royal Navy SMS is also aligned with ISO 45001, which specifies requirements for an occupational health and safety management system.

We are now better positioned to consider these factors as we move forward to develop a more effective SMS that will instill trust and senior leadership buy-in, and that assures risk management is engrained from the top down into each organization's culture as a means of supporting their bottom line.

Q11. How will these changes reduce risk across the enterprise?

A11. We realize we cannot ultimately eliminate all risk, but we can reduce risk across the enterprise. Our focus is identifying and managing risk and ensure commanders assume that risk at the appropriate echelon level and with accountability through transparency.

Q12. How will the Navy's recently formed Learning to Action Board (L2AB) direct NAVSAFECOM?

A12. In its assessment role, the L2AB will direct spot checks by NAVSAFECOM of prior learning and recommendations, including from reviews such as the Comprehensive Review (CR) and Strategic Readiness Review (SRR), and oversee an expanded fleet-driven approach to organizational self-assessments and NAVSAFECOM-driven personnel surveys. Through this design the L2AB and NAVSAFECOM provide a continuing comprehensive view of the Navy's effectiveness to implement effective and enduring actions to address issues to ensure preventable adverse events do not reoccur in the future.