

THE LUTON SAFETY STACK

Organisations, such as ANSPs, airports and airlines, are part of a wider system, and so are affected by safety issues in other organisations, or at the interfaces between organisations. So there is a need for collaboration between organisations. But in practice, how can organisations work together on safety? In this article, **Barry Kirwan, Siân Blanchard and Sarah Flaherty** outline the approach at London Luton Airport.

KEY POINTS

1. **Organisations are interdependent and safety issues in one organisation can have implications for others.**
2. **Organisations in a shared place, such as an airport, have the opportunity to meet to discuss problems and opportunities.**
3. **The Luton Safety Stack provides an example of a working collaborative initiative to help manage safety across interfaces, based on safety practice development and safety intelligence sharing initiatives between 15 organisations based at the airport.**

In 2015 an EU-funded project called Future Sky Safety was launched. One of its main aims was to adapt the EUROCONTROL safety culture approach, already used in air traffic organisations in more than 30 European countries, to the airline and airport side of the aviation operation. This was seen as strategic for safety, since there is significant cost pressure on the industry at present.



The work began with a detailed survey of a European airline followed by a safety culture survey of more than 7000 European pilots, which made the national and international press. But the most interesting and promising work so far has been at London Luton Airport (LLA), with what has become known as the Luton Safety Stack.

The idea is simple. At an airport there are many organisations who have to work together to enable smooth and safe airport operations for passengers, freight and business users. Such users range from airlines, air traffic control and ground handlers, to de-icers, fuel services, baggage handlers, caterers and cleaning services. They are all connected. If one of them has a problem, then they all do. They need to work closely together, and they already do, so why not have them work together on safety?



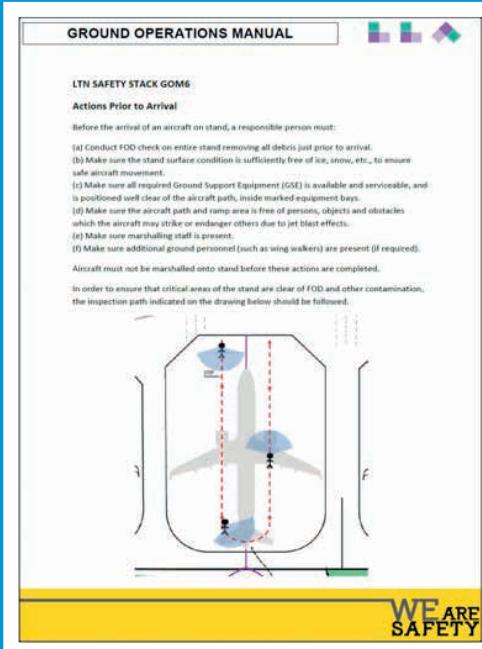
The work began in late 2016 with six independent safety culture surveys of key organisations at London Luton Airport. This was the first time this had been done, and it was interesting to see the differences. Each organisation had a detailed snapshot of its safety culture and its strengths and opportunities for development. It could have ended there.

The six organisations met and decided to share information on each other's surveys

But what happened next was both surprising and exceptional. The six organisations met and decided to share information on each other's surveys. Not the detail, but where they were doing well, and where they needed support. And they decided this was not a one-off. Rather, they formed a group of (currently) 15 organisations, all based at the airport, called the LTN Safety Stack, led by London Luton Airport (LLA) and assisted by EUROCONTROL, who lead this particular Future Sky Safety project. It's called a 'stack' because the original concept used a vertical representation of the companies, from the ground upwards, and used this word to describe it.



The Stack members are developing harmonised procedures for all operators at LTN, and for each operation



What does the Stack do? Since January 2017 when it was formed, there have been four meetings, which always include a workshop element. The most tangible outcome so far has been the work on Ground Handling. At LTN, as at many airports, there are several ground handling organisations and a number of airlines. The way operations are carried out, such as preparing for aircraft arrival, chocking an aircraft, or cone placement around an aircraft, can vary between the handlers and the airlines. This variability can lead to inconsistencies, which could allow hazards to appear, or lead to delays. The Stack members are developing harmonised procedures for all operators at LTN, and for each operation, creating a simple one-page procedure with diagrams, to keep it simple and safe. This initiative has already created national and international interest through the UK CAA GHOST and IGOM programmes.

From the very first meeting, the Stack wanted to encourage sharing of safety information, including incidents and any kind of near miss. LTN organisations, as at any airport, have their safety management systems and reporting responsibilities, and meet regularly to discuss safety performance. But the

way the regulations are framed at the moment, it is as if to say that if each organisation looks after its own safety, then all will be well. The Stack sees this as a limited vision. It proposes that it would be better if organisations, even competitors, would help each other, by saying, "look, we had this event yesterday, it could happen to you". Again, this isn't pure altruism. It makes business sense, because at an airport, if one organisation fails, then everyone takes a hit.

To make this real, the LTN Safety Stack is developing a common safety dashboard, where each organisation will contribute its main current and upcoming concerns. This is not meant to be a tool just for safety managers, it will also be in the crew rooms and on an app that people can download on their phones. As one Stack member put it, everyone has a phone, so why not put the information there?

There are other Stack initiatives. One is called 'A day in the life at LTN', and will result in a short LTN-specific video covering all the different roles that make an airport work safely and efficiently. There are 'Walk in my shoes' opportunities, where people from different jobs can see what it's like to be



a pilot, a controller, a ground handler, a de-icer, etc. This isn't just for fun. The more connected organisations understand each other at the operational sharp end, the better, and the safer those operations will be, because they will understand each other's constraints and pressures, and will be better able to help prevent anything going wrong, or quickly bring it back under control if an event starts happening. There are also reward initiatives ongoing in several Stack organisations, for the best safety 'catch', so there is a focus on positive safety, reinforcing what to do, and not only what not to do.

The Stack comes under the UK Aviation Industry brand 'We are Safety', a strong affirmative statement intended to foster an identity linked to safety. It is expected that those who adopt this banner undertake a commitment that will lead to better safety awareness, and safer behaviour. This is safety culture in action.

The LTN Safety Stack aims to share safety intelligence, and in this spirit, if any other airport is interested in hearing more about this approach, the LTN Stack will be happy to share. 

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

The authors would like to thank all those organisations who have participated in the LTN Safety Stack initiative, as well as acknowledge the support of the Future Sky Safety Project, funded by the EU, though the opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission. For more information on Future Sky Safety please contact barry.kirwan@eurocontrol.int.



Barry Kirwan is a human factors and safety specialist who has worked at EUROCONTROL for the past 17 years, primarily in the area of safety research and safety culture assessment. He has been managing the EU-funded OPTICS project for the past four years, evaluating the impact of European aviation safety research, and is currently leading one of the EU-funded Future Sky Safety projects concerning organisational risks, which has led to the LTN Safety Stack work.



Siân Blanchard leads the Health and Human Performance capability at easyJet, supporting all parts of the aviation operation from flight operations, engineering and maintenance, ground operations and cabin services. She has worked as a human factors practitioner for 14 years in aviation, rail and defence. She is an accredited Aviation Psychologist with the European Association for Aviation Psychology and an Associate Fellow and Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society.



Dr Sarah Flaherty is a human performance specialist with 25 years of experience across the aviation (civil aviation and military), rail and petrochemical industries. Sarah has provided consulting, coaching and training to operators, regulators, manufacturers, ground service providers and airports. She is a member of the British Psychological Society, the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors and sits on a number of EASA, Royal Aeronautical Society and industry working groups.



Adam Simmonson

David Cross

easyJet

Jason Sandiver

gategroup

WE ARE SAFETY

AN AWARENESS THAT RUNS THROUGH ALL OF US

We are proud to launch We Are Safety, a new initiative to further raise awareness of aviation safety standards.

By working as a team of companies, we can achieve far more together.

Join us and help improve safety in our industry.

Be the experience. Be safety. We are safety.

JUST CULTURE