



# Interagency Aviation Safety Alert



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**Subject:** The SAFECOM System – Your chance to speak out !

**Area of Concern:** Aviation Operations

**Distribution:** All Fire and Aviation Personnel

**Discussion:** The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), maintain one of the most powerful accident prevention tools in the industry, the SAFECOM!

Address  <http://www.safecom.gov/>



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## SAFECOM

Aviation Safety Communique' 

**The Aviation Safety Communique (SAFECOM) database** fulfills the Aviation Mishap Information System (AMIS) requirements for aviation mishap reporting for the Department of Interior agencies and the US Forest Service. Categories of reports include incidents, hazards, maintenance, and airspace. The system uses the SAFECOM Form [OAS-34/FS-5700-14](#) to report any condition, observation, act, maintenance problem, or circumstance with personnel or the aircraft that has the potential to cause an aviation-related mishap. The SAFECOM system is **not** intended for initiating punitive actions. Submitting a SAFECOM is **not** a substitute for "on-the-spot" correction(s) to a safety concern. It is a tool used to identify, document, track and correct safety related issues. A SAFECOM **does not** replace the requirement for initiating an accident or incident report.

Please contact OAS at (208)433-5070 or USFS at (208)387-5285 to report problems with the SAFECOM database.

The SAFECOM is similar to the FAA's Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS - FAR 91.25) in that it is a voluntary reporting system for aviation hazards. However, as opposed to the ASRS that depends on the receipt of hundreds of reports that identify a similar problem and then publishing a report for corrective action purposes, the SAFECOM system provides immediate information to leaders at all levels of the organization that enables them to take corrective action in real time.

The SAFECOM website (<http://www.safecom.gov>) provides excellent guidance on how and when to submit a SAFECOM. However, all too often the SAFECOM system is misunderstood and underutilized. Failure to understand and use the SAFECOM system can prolong an unsafe situation, increase costs, and in a worst-case scenario cost someone their life.



**Frequently heard reasons for not using the SAFECOM system:**

*Saving electrons by not telling the whole story.* You don't have to write a book, but too little information can cause your SAFECOM to be dismissed without the attention it deserves. Remember, the person reading your SAFECOM can't understand what you're reporting unless you explain it clearly and thoroughly.

*Letting "someone else" do it.* Submitting a SAFECOM is free and only takes a few minutes. Hoping someone else will see the same thing you see and will report it has cost at least one pilot his life. Multiple SAFECOMs for a single event, submitted by different people provide different points of view and are extremely valuable.

*I will when I get around to it.* There may be times when the pace or remoteness of operations make it difficult to submit a SAFECOM. However, all too often a minor situation, or a series of minor situations, will not get reported until it develops into a major problem.

*I don't want to get someone in trouble.* This is understandable, except for at least two significant factors. First, in DOI and the FS, SAFECOMs are expressly prohibited from being used for anything other than accident prevention purposes (352DM6.9(B) and FSM 5720). While program managers at various levels do have access to SAFECOMs, and some issues identified in SAFECOMs are serious enough to warrant additional follow-up action, the SAFECOM by itself is not allowed to be used for punitive purposes. In such a case the manager must investigate the issue independently of the SAFECOM before taking action. The second problem with the statement "I don't want to get someone in trouble" is that by withholding information about a true safety hazard you might actually be endangering the very person you don't want to get in trouble.

*SAFECOMs are only for Government folks to write bad things about Vendors.* This statement combines two fallacies, first that vendors should not write SAFECOMs and second that SAFECOMs should only be used to document "bad things". The truth is that our accident prevention efforts will never be as good as they could be if we don't actively seek the participation of our vendors (owners, pilots, and support staff). Furthermore, if you (vendor or government personnel) see something good happening, by all means let the person (or persons) doing good know, and if you think it is worthy let us know too. **Your SAFECOM might result in anything from a simple "thank you" from a local manager, to a more formal recognition from a State or National-level manager, to someone receiving a well-deserved "Airward."**

While NO system is perfect, the SAFECOM system remains an invaluable tool in our continuing efforts to reduce costly aircraft accidents by applying lessons learned from less serious incidents. Our safety culture and the SAFECOM system is depending on you and your input. **If you see something, say something.** Remember, the SAFECOM that you initiate today could save a life tomorrow. For additional information contact either Bob Galloway, DOI-AM at (208) 433-5071 or Ron Hanks, USDA-FS at (208) 387-5607.

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