Strengthening the Protection of Airline Passengers' Rights: The Role of Safety Information Communication

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Abstract

This article employs a documentary research methodology to propose measures to strengthen the protection of airline passengers' rights. The findings are intended to contribute to improving the Thai aviation industry. Passengers can also pose safety barriers, presenting challenges in minimizing such risks while simultaneously encouraging passenger engagement to improve safety awareness. To address this challenge, this article applies a comparative approach by examining the regulatory frameworks of various countries, including Canada, the United States, and Switzerland, and by presenting key principles of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The main points are summarized as follows: First, it is proposed that a "Passenger Protection Inquiries Office" should be established. This body would help implement a legally enforceable passenger protection plan and serve as a central hub for consumers to learn about aviation regulations and the country's aviation emergency preparedness. Second, for effective communication, this article emphasizes that a safety briefing is not only intended to inform passengers but is also vital for legal compliance. This information can be communicated through various channels, both by the government and the airlines. The effectiveness of safety announcements and demonstrations is essential for emergency management, as passengers who ignore safety communications often fail to adequately prepare for potential dangers. In conclusion, effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering a shared commitment between passengers and airlines to cooperate in emergency measures.

Keywords: *Rights of airline passengers, Emergency Preparedness Management, Communicating Safety Information, Thai Aviation*

1. Introduction

In the aviation industry, safety is at the heart of business operations. If safety is compared to prevention and products and services to output, both must be balanced like weights on a scale for the business to operate continuously and sustainably.

The development process for civil aviation regulations often involves incorporating complaints and feedback from stakeholders, while ensuring that the principles of the International Civil Aviation Organization's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) and those of regulatory authorities such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the United States are fully understood. Therefore, communicating information to passengers is not only essential for passenger protection but also plays a crucial role in ensuring that legal frameworks are aligned with international principles.

2. Objectives

1) To strengthen the protection of the Thai airline passengers' rights.
2) To identify factors supporting the implementation of the National Civil Aviation Safety Plan
3) To examine international guidelines for communicating safety information to passengers on airplanes for emergency management.

3. Materials and Methods

This documentary research adopts a comparative approach by examining the regulatory frameworks of various countries, including Canada, the United States, and Switzerland, and by presenting key principles

of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The study is conducted through the collection and analysis of data from various sources e.g. textbooks, theses, journals and academic articles.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1 Concept of the Safety Management System (SMS)

In the aviation industry, a Safety Management System (SMS) is essential and mandatory. The regulatory authority is the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), which is responsible for the overall inspection and supervision of Safety Management Systems implemented by service providers, including airlines, airports, flight training centers, aircraft maintenance organizations, air traffic control units, and aircraft design and manufacturing companies. Therefore, all aviation-related establishments must have a CAAT-certified SMS to obtain a business license. These requirements are in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Document 9859 and the State Safety Programme

1) Definition of Safety Management System (SMS)

It refers to a systematic process for managing safety, which includes organizational structures, defined responsibilities, and safety management policies and procedures. It consists of four main components commonly referred to as the SMS Framework or the Four Pillars. These components include: (1) Safety Policy and Objectives (2) Safety Risk Management (3) Safety Assurance and (4) Safety promotion. All components must incorporate training, communication and the promotion of a positive safety culture among employees at all levels. (OHSWA, 2024)

2) Key points of the National Civil Aviation Safety Plan and additional amendments

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand has the duty to supervise and control the implementation of the National Civil Aviation Safety Plan. Separately, the National Civil Aviation Safety Committee is responsible for managing the National Civil Aviation Safety Plan in accordance with its objectives and goals. This structure is established in accordance with the Civil Aviation Board's announcement on the National Civil Aviation Safety Plan 2023. (Department of Airports, 2024).

4.1.2 Emergency management of airline services in accordance with international principles

As defined in the Chicago Convention Annex, a State Safety Programme is "an integrated set of regulations and activities aimed at improving safety" (ICAO Document 9859). Its objective is to achieve an acceptable level of safety in aviation services, with an emphasis on the State's Safety Policy and Objectives, as follows: (skybrary, 2025)

4.1.2.1 Civil Aviation Authority Safety Standards Framework

The State is responsible for promulgating a national legal framework and providing guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to oversee specific activities related to the State Safety, including the relationships among various organizations within the aviation system.

1) CAA Safety Responsibilities and Accountabilities

The CAA is responsible for maintaining the State Safety program. This includes providing the human resources and finances necessary for the implementation. of the State Safety program

2) Guidelines for accident and incident investigation

The State shall establish an independent process for investigating accidents and incidents, with the aim of supporting safety management in the State.

3) Law Enforcement Policy

The State shall promulgate a law enforcement policy requires operators and service providers to address and resolve safety-related incidents within the framework of a Safety Management System (SMS). The policy shall also include measures to enforce the law and address incidents involving gross negligence through established law enforcement procedures.

4.1.2.2 Guidelines for State Safety Risk Management

1) Safety requirements for SMS service providers

The CAA has established requirements and procedures for identifying operational hazards and managing safety risks for service providers. These include specific requirements, procedures and,

implementation policies for SMS, which are periodically reviewed periodically to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness.

2) Acceptable level of safety

The CAA has approved acceptable levels of safety for each service provider. These levels are based on each service provider's specific operational context and the availability of resources to manage safety risks. The acceptable levels of safety are periodically reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate for the service provider.

3) Guidelines for Approving Acceptable Safety Levels

The CAA approves acceptable levels of safety for each service provider. These acceptable levels of safety depend on the complexity of each service provider's operational, its specific operational context and the availability of resources to manage safety risks.

4) Safety regulatory system

The CAA is responsible for establishing mechanisms to ensure that operational hazard identification and safety risk management by operators/service providers are carried out in accordance with established regulations. These mechanisms include regulatory oversight, audits, and inspections to ensure that safety risks are properly identified and managed.

The CAA must establish mechanisms to ensure that information on operational hazards and safety risks is collected and stored at the state level. In addition, the National Safety Standards Agency must establish and maintain a repository for the exchange safety information with service providers and, where appropriate, with other States.

The CAA must establish procedures for prioritizing audits and inspections in areas requiring heightened safety measures, as well as for identifying areas of elevated safety risk.

4.1.2.3 Examples of Emergency Management of Airline Services in Canada

The development process for civil aviation regulations often involves receiving complaints and feedback from stakeholders. Therefore, communicating information to passengers is not only essential for passenger protection but also plays a significant role in shaping laws that are aligned with international principles.

In some cases, ICAO has emphasized the need for States to implement comprehensive State operated SMS frameworks to communicate safety measures and emergency management to the public, not only for the benefit of the aviation industry. (skybrary.aero., 2025)

As survival in an aircraft accident depends on many factors, safety certification standards (such as deplaning) are designed to increase passenger survivability. Crew evacuation procedures also improve survival rates, as passenger are better able to respond effectively when they are informed about the appropriate tools to use and the actions to take in an emergency.

1) Secure Air Travel Act

This Act establishes the legal framework for passenger protection plans to enhance transportation and national security. The Act empowers the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (or his or her delegate) to implement and enforce its provisions. (Department of justice Canada, 2025)

2) Responsible Agency

The Passenger Protect Inquiries Office (PPIO) is responsible for air transportation security. Its responsibilities include designating individuals on the Secure Air Travel Act list (SATA) List and supporting the role of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in matters relating to the Passenger Protect Program and the Passport Program. This office is a part of Canada's Passenger Protect Program (PPP), which is responsible for administering the country's no-fly list, also known as the Secure Air Travel Act (SATA) List. (Public Safety Canada, 2025).

3) Safety and Risk Management System

NAV CANADA is a private, not-for-profit corporation that operates Canada's civil aviation navigation system. It was established under the Civil Air Navigation Services Commercialization Act. (Department of justice, 2025).

NAV CANADA provides air traffic control, airport advisory and flight information services within Canada's domestic and international airspace, while also promoting safety and technological innovation. (Navcanada, 2025).

An Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) is a government or private entity that provides air navigation services to airspace users, including Air Traffic Management (ATM), Communications, Navigation and Surveillance (CNS). As one of the first Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSP)in the world, NAV CANADA pioneered the implementation of a Safety Management System (SMS) in 1997. This system was designed to proactively, systematically, and consistently enhance safety awareness and manage risk. (Navcanada, 2025).

Safety is a fundamental principle of a fully integrated SMS, and a critical success factor, supported by the following elements:

1. A trustworthy and collaborative environment among internal and external aviation industry stakeholders.

2. Open sharing of safety information is shared openly to support continuous improvement in reducing operational safety risks.

3. Active participation in the Canadian Aviation Safety Officer Partnership program (launched in 2010) to facilitate the exchange of safety information among aviation experts in Canada.

NAV CANADA plays a critical role in maintaining the safety of Canadian airspace. NAV CANADA's Safety Charter aims to:

1) Make safety an integral responsibility of all personnel;
2) Ensure that safety is embedded in all operational activities without exception;
3) Establish and exceed defined safety performance targets;
4) Promote safety excellence through open and effective communication;
5) Continuously enhance the overall safety system.

4.1.3 Guidelines for Communicating Safety Information to Passengers

1) Public communication: In practice, when regulations affect consumers, public communication must be conducted by relevant government agencies such as the Department of Airports, the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) or through official communication channels such as the Government Information Center for the Public, GCC's post. (Department of airports, 2025).

2) Airline Communication: According to ICAO, English is the most important language in the aviation industry.

The primary goal of communicating with international travelers is to ensure that passengers receive essential information and services effectively. (Poramate C., 2022).

Although in-flight media services primarily provide entertainment through a personalized content selection approach, they also serve another critical function: the delivery of safety information." This medium functions as a direct communication channel, and its effectiveness depends on the responsibility and implementation of each airline. (Taya C., 2009).

4.1.4 Examples of International Guidelines for Communicating Information to Air Passengers

1) Switzerland

	Passenger Briefing Guidelines
Before boarding	Passengers are advised to bring essential personal items, such as medication.

During flight	Passengers should manage stress levels (e.g., by avoiding loud conversations) and remain attentive to safety instructions. Airlines should encourage passengers to be aware of their surroundings and report any irregularities. In addition, passengers must be informed of any unexpected situations, such as emergency landings, including clear instructions on the use of safety equipment (e.g., life jackets and evacuation systems).
Preparation for landing	Passengers should remain attentive and follow crew instructions, while preparing their belongings for arrival and ensuring compliance with safety procedures.

However, there are some safety principles to consider, such as pilots having a responsibility to their passengers, not only legally, but also ethically. When passengers trust their pilots, it makes a passenger flight more than just an "ordinary" one. (staysafe.aero, 2025)

2) USA

[S-A-F-E-T-Y Briefing] (FAA, 2024).	
Seatbelts	The pilot in command (PIC) is assigned two specific duties: 1. The PIC must ensure that all passengers on board are briefed on how to fasten and loosen their seatbelts. 2. Passengers must be informed that they must fasten their seatbelts before the pilot can legally take off, or land the aircraft. Passengers should also be briefed on how to adjust and lock their seats.
Air	Ensure that all passengers are aware of the location of the vents and instruct them on how to open and close the overhead and/or floor-level vents in their seating area. Many general aviation (GA) aircraft are equipped with additional environmental controls, such as cabin heating.
Fire Extinguisher	Fire extinguishers on aircraft must be shown to all passengers, including their location, how to unlock them, and how to use them in the event of a fire.
Equipment	It is essential to ensure that all passengers know how to open the doors in case of an emergency evacuation and understand any equipment, such as supplemental oxygen, that they may need during the flight. As part of emergency preparedness, a brief exit plan should be outlined, particularly for aircraft with doors on both sides of the fuselage. (For example, passengers seated in the rear should be instructed to exit the aircraft through the left-side door, while those seated in the front should exit through the right-side door.)
Traffic and talking	Passengers should assist in monitoring traffic. For example, they should be encouraged to report the presence of nearby aircraft (e.g., by stating "aircraft to your right") or be instructed to provide traffic information using the clock-position system commonly used in air traffic control (ATC).
Your questions?	It must be ensured that all passengers understand the information conveyed by the pilot in command.

3) Canada

	Appropriate Content for Communication and Passenger Briefing (Transport Canada, 2025).
About the aircraft	Passengers should be briefed on boarding procedures, baggage and storage restrictions, seat belt operation, proper adjustment of seat backs, the location of

	safety equipment, the identification and use of emergency exits, and the availability of survival kits and other safety equipment.
Additional instructions	Passengers should be advised to remain calm, for example by taking deep breaths, particularly in emergency situations such as a potential water landing. Passengers should be instructed on their position relative to the nearest emergency exit and advised to wait until conditions are safe (e.g., equalized pressure in the case of water ingress) before opening the exit. They should then unfasten their safety harness, exit the aircraft promptly, and inflate their life jacket only after leaving the aircraft.
General problems	The absence of a public address system, combined with cabin noise, may make it difficult for passengers to hear safety briefings. Additionally, on short flights, limited time may restrict the ability to deliver comprehensive briefings.
Resolution	A comprehensive pre-flight safety briefing should be conducted to ensure that all passengers receive and understand essential safety information prior to departure.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1 Analyze of Recommended Guideline for Aviation Emergency Management

	Standards	**Specific guidelines**	**Specific agencies**
ICAO	Establish acceptable levels of safety. [The State is responsible for promulgating a national legal framework and providing guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to oversee specific activities related to the state's safety.]	Establish a State Safety Programme (SSP) that has an independent process for investigating accidents and incidents. [The State is responsible for promulgating a national legal framework and providing guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to oversee safety-related activities.]	Coordination exists among various organizations responsible for aviation safety. [The State shall promulgate a law enforcement policy that requires operators and service providers to address and resolve safety-related incidents within the framework of a Safety Management System (SMS) and to implement appropriate enforcement measures.]
Canada	The Safety Management System (SMS) is strengthened through the integration of stakeholders across the aviation industry.	NAV CANADA's Safety Charter promotes safety as an integral part of all operations and responsibilities.	The Passenger Protect Inquiries Office (PPIO) maintains air transport security, including aviation emergency preparedness.
Thailand	The Civil Aviation Authority of	There is no formally published safety charter	There is no dedicated agency, such as a Passenger Protection

	Thailand (CAAT) is responsible for the inspection and supervision of Safety Management System (SMS) implementation.	specifically addressing passenger-focused safety communication.	Office, specifically responsible for passenger rights and safety communication.

4.2.2 Appropriate Approaches to Communicating Information to Airline Passengers.

	Appropriate content for briefing
Switzerland	Passenger briefings are provided at key points during the flight, particularly during takeoff and landing preparations. Clear control of onboard communication is maintained throughout the flight, and passengers are encouraged to actively participate in identifying anomalies in the airspace.
United States	The United States adopts the S-A-F-E-T-Y framework as a clear and structured safety briefing method, in which each component represents a key safety element: 1. Seatbelts: Proper seatbelt fastening 2. Air: Key environmental controls, including proper air quality 3. Fire Extinguisher: Preventing damage that may occur in the event of an emergency 4. Equipment: Understanding essential safety equipment and emergency exit procedures 5. Traffic and Talk: Communication regarding surrounding air traffic conditions 6. Your questions? Ensuring that all passengers understand the information provided.
Canada	All safety briefings should be conducted before engines start. Safety briefings should be delivered in an engaging, face-to-face manner. Safety briefings not only inform passengers but also ensure compliance with legal requirements. In an emergency, well-briefed passengers are less reliant on the crew and have a better chance of survival.
Thailand	Passengers are provided with briefings on their rights, particularly during takeoff and landing preparations. During the flight, passengers are encouraged to actively participate in monitoring the airspace and identifying any irregularities.

ICAO has emphasized the need for States to implement comprehensive State operated SMS systems to effectively communicate safety measures and emergency management procedures to the public, rather than limiting such efforts solely to the aviation industry. Effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering shared commitment among passengers to comply with airline emergency procedures. Effective communication also reflects an airline's responsibility and operational efficiency.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Aviation Emergency Preparedness Management

Effective aviation safety requires a balance between safety management and operational efficiency.

Overall, it is recommended to establish a Passenger Protection Office as an independent body separate from licensing functions. This office would develop a legally enforceable passenger protection framework and serve as a central hub for consumers to access aviation regulations and submit initial complaints. The information collected by this office can be used to further enhance the development and governance of the Thai aviation industry.

5.1.2 Guidelines for Communicating Information to Air Passengers

For effective communication, safety briefings should be engaging and delivered in a face-to-face manner.

They should involve passengers by maintaining eye contact and speaking at a slower pace than usual. Even if a passenger appears uninterested, it remains necessary to provide explanations, as frequent travelers may not be aware that equipment on the same type of aircraft can vary. In other words, a safety briefing not only informs passengers but also complies with the law. This information can be communicated through various channels by both government and airline

5.2 Recommendations

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is working on developing the Convention on the Protection of Tourists and on the Rights and Obligations of Tourism Service Providers, which includes specific state obligations to provide assistance in emergency situations. Consultations with UNWTO member states are underway to further refine the draft Convention. Some of these refinements will likely further enhance the rights of air passengers. This will encourage countries to uphold the fundamental principles of fair and equal opportunity in competition, non-discrimination, transparency, coordination, compatibility, and appropriate cooperation.

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