

**57th CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

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AGENDA ITEM 3: AVIATION SAFETY

**USE OF ISAGO TO COMPLEMENT OVERSIGHT OF GROUND HANDLING
SERVICE PROVIDERS (GHSPS) AND TO DRIVE GLOBAL STANDARDIZATION**

Presented by the International Air Transport Association (IATA)

SUMMARY

To support and supplement the air operator's oversight of outsourced ground handling operations, the IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) exists as an independent assessment of a ground handling service provider (GHSP). ISAGO drives implementation of standardized operational procedures and management system requirements by GHSPs thereby increasing the adoption of harmonized industry best practices such as the IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM) amongst the ground handling stakeholders.

ISAGO contributes towards better GHSPs' performance and towards risk reduction in ground operations complementing safety assurance activities of air and aerodrome operators. The ISAGO audit reports can, if recognized by the regulatory authority, compensate and/or complement an air operator's own oversight audits. In addition, the ISAGO audits and audit reports provide safety assurances that contribute to a State Safety Programme, supplementing aerodrome certification and aerodrome licensing requirements and offering an industry solution in lieu of global ground handling regulation.

USE OF ISAGO TO COMPLEMENT OVERSIGHT OF GROUND HANDLING SERVICE PROVIDERS (GHSPS) AND TO DRIVE GLOBAL STANDARDIZATION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ground handling operations are performed by air operators with ground-handling capabilities or are outsourced to ground handling service providers (GHSPs) contracted by the air operator. In most cases ground handling operations are performed in accordance with, procedures and standards based on industry best practices published by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). These procedures, standards and best practices are generated by technical groups of subject matter experts from both airlines and GHSPs. State regulations usually make the contracting air operator responsible for oversight of the outsourced operations. To support and supplement the air operator's oversight, the IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) exists as an independent assessment of a ground handling service provider against industry-developed organization, management, and operational standards.

1.2 ISAGO is an industry program for the global oversight of GHSPs. ISAGO drives implementation of standardized operational procedures and management system requirements by GHSPs thereby increasing the adoption of the harmonized industry best practices (BPs) amongst ground handling stakeholders. ISAGO contributes towards better GHSP performance and towards risk reduction in ground operations. The ISAGO audits are performed by qualified and experienced auditors (members of the Charter of Professional Auditors/CoPA) whose selection, qualification and performance is managed and overseen by IATA.

1.3 The IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM) is the global industry standard for ground handling worldwide. It drives standardization of ground handling processes and procedures to reduce the complexity between working with multiple airlines, airports and GHSPs. Standardization also enables simplification and harmonization of training requirements for ground operations personnel.

1.4 The Tenth Meeting of the Regional Aviation Safety Group Asia and Pacific Regions (RASG-APAG/10) acknowledged the contribution of ISAGO in the oversight of ground handling and recognized the safety assurance benefits that ISAGO brings, including during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting encouraged States/Administrations to complement their State Safety Programme and air operator regulatory activities through recognition of ISAGO as an acceptable means of oversight of ground handling service providers.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 As of 31st of May 2022, there were 190 GHSPs in the ISAGO Registry providing services at 289 accredited stations at 190 airports worldwide. In 2021, 293 audits were completed. 110 audits were done between Jan-May 2022. An average of 220 audits are performed each year with an average of 12 findings per report. The ISAGO Registry offers close to 500 different audit reports. IATA provides details of ISAGO registrations, station accreditations and access to audit reports to airlines, regulators and airports that support the ISAGO program.

2.2 The ISAGO audit reports can, if recognized by the regulatory authority, complement an air operator's own oversight audits. In addition, the ISAGO audits and audit reports can provide safety assurances that contribute to a State Safety Programme, supplementing aerodrome certification and aerodrome licensing requirements and offering an industry solution in lieu of global ground handling regulation.

2.3 The ISAGO auditing requirements require a fully implemented safety management system and are fully aligned with the corresponding ground handling service provider provisions specified in ICAO Doc 10121, Manual on Ground Handling, which was published in December 2019. In addition, ISAGO SMS requirements for GHSPs are in compliance with ICAO Annex 19.

2.4 As a baseline, ISAGO uses conformity with the IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM) and the IATA Airport Handling Manual (AHM). The program ensures and validates that GHSPs conform to the industry operational best practises, including ground operations training requirements as described in AHM 1100. IGOM and ISAGO complement each other in driving much-needed harmonization across the ground handling sector with an aim to reduce risk, avoid ground damage and enable standardized, sustainable operations.

2.5 ISAGO provides an additional layer of control for an airline's SMS in the area of outsourced ground operations services. The program contributes to a risk reduction of loss of control in flight by addressing the ground operations root causes and contributing factors, including: SOP adherence / SOP cross-verification; inadequate training; FOD; incorrect GSE servicing and operations; along with several others. In general, ISAGO provides air operators with complementary information and a solution to strengthen and simplify their oversight programs.

2.6 Additionally, as the aviation sector and ground handling in particular, are facing a severe labor shortage, greater standardization is one of the many solutions that can support staff retention and attraction. Global standardization will improve performance, provide employment flexibility and broader career options. Implementation of IGOM can lead towards more efficient onboarding, which would provide additional flexibility and opportunities for staff in terms of relocation, reassignment and recruitment.

2.7 The goals of the Global Aviation Safety Plan 2020-2022 include a call for all States to strengthen their safety oversight capabilities and expand the use of industry programs. The ISAGO Program can be used to complement both goals by enhancing the safety performance of operations that are generally not directly regulated and for which there are no globally applicable regulatory provisions.

2.8 The ICAO High Level Covid Conference (HLCC2021-WP/248-PLN/6), under the *Safety Stream, Agenda Item 3 – Standardization, 3.3. Ground Handling*, recommended that States review the safety performance of ground handling services at aerodromes under their jurisdiction using a flexible and balanced approach for the oversight of ground handling services, taking into account existing guidance material.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The DGCA/57 Conference is invited to:

- a) Note the information presented;
- b) Encourage States to implement ICAO Doc 10121 Manual on Ground Handling and recognize industry initiatives that drive ground harmonized operations, standardization, SMS implementation by GHSPs and risk reduction in ground operations;
- c) Continue working with industry to develop a flexible and balanced approach to strengthen the oversight of ground handling;
- d) Endorse and urge States to recognize IGOM as a standardized procedure for ground handling operations;
- e) Endorse and urge States to recognize ISAGO as an acceptable means of compliance to requirements for air operator oversight of ground handling operations; and
- f) Urge international civil aerodromes operators to recognize ISAGO as a standardized oversight of ground handling operations.