

# Senior Persons

Senior Persons are key personnel in certificated aviation organisations, those who can properly and effectively manage all the functions associated with an operation, taking into account the organisation's size and range of operations.

They are not necessarily senior in years but experienced, skilled, and knowledgeable people; those who can help drive the safety culture of an organisation and manage its safety.

## Their Importance

Mark Hughes, CAA General Manager Airlines, emphasises the importance of the senior person role.

"The importance of senior persons in an organisation cannot be understated. By their actions and words, the Chief Executive and the senior management team set the boundaries of acceptable performance for the organisation's personnel. Adherence to policies and procedures, open sharing of information and concerns, and safe practices are elements which managers need to emphasise and support. Managers must understand human factors, and find the right balance between managing human error and holding individuals to account. Management has a responsibility to create a positive organisational culture to enhance safety performance and prevent accidents," Mark advises.

## Who They Are

They are safety critical members in an aviation organisation, those who will exercise an appropriate level of control, direction and responsibility to ensure the continued safety and effective running of the varying operations.

In order to hold an air operator certificate, an organisation must engage the services of certain people who will be named as Senior Persons, and who will report to the Chief Executive.

## Certification

An essential part of the air operator certification process is the nomination (and CAA acceptance) of suitable senior persons in terms of rule 119.51 or 119.101, as applicable. Without suitable senior persons in place, an organisation cannot be certificated, or continue to carry out its planned activities.

When nominating Senior Persons, organisations need to consider a candidate's experience and skills to perform

the role, their qualifications, their attitude toward safety and compliance, and that no barriers or behavioural problems exist that could hinder a candidate in performing their role. Candidates also need sufficient time, resource and authority to fulfil their responsibilities.

"Organisations have a strong responsibility to put the right people forward, those who have the right material to be a Senior Person, which CAA will test," Mark says.

The Civil Aviation Act 1990 is the primary legislation, and a good understanding of its requirements is essential. Some of the fundamental requirements for the nomination of Senior Persons are found in section 9, *Grant or Renewal of aviation document*, and section 10, *Criteria for fit and proper person test*. Further, section 12 contains the general requirements for participants in the civil aviation system.

## What They Do

The rules require Senior Persons to be responsible for ensuring that the activities of the organisation can be financed and carried out in accordance with the rules. This includes such things as the safe and efficient management of operations, training and competency, control and direction, an organisation's management system, conducting occurrence investigations, and ensuring the organisation complies with its procedures manuals.

## Preparation

Good preparation for prospective candidates is really important. For example, a comprehensive understanding of the organisation's exposition and the applicable Rules is essential.

A follow-up *Vector* article will contain further information on how to prepare to be a Senior Person.

## Read On

Part 119 *Air Operator - Certification*, see the various sections on personnel requirements.

AC 119-1 *Air Operator Certification*.

"Senior Persons", November/December 2006 *Vector*. Refer to [www.caa.govt.nz](http://www.caa.govt.nz) under 'Publications'.

ICAO document 9859 *Safety Management Manual*. Refer to [www.icao.int](http://www.icao.int) ■

For Chief Executive  Air Operator Security  Occurrence Investigation   
A Senior Person  (Title of appointment \_\_\_\_\_)

Legal Name of Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

# To Be a Senior Person

**S**o you want to be a senior person. Well, do you have the 'right stuff', do you know what it takes to be one, do you understand what it could demand of you, and are you prepared to make the commitment to enhance safety?

If you know you don't, or even if you think you do, then read on.

## The Person

The January/February 2012 issue of *Vector* has a *Senior Persons* article that discusses their importance, who they are, what they do, preparation and certification.

In that article Mark Hughes, CAA General Manager Airlines, emphasised the importance of the role. Among other things he said that senior persons must understand human factors and strike the right balance between managing human error and holding individuals to account, and create a positive organisational culture.

"Organisations have a strong responsibility to put the right people forward, those who have the right material to be a senior person," Mark says.

With those thoughts in mind, organisations need to ensure that their senior person candidates have the right experience, skills, knowledge and qualifications (where applicable) and have a positive attitude toward safety and compliance.

The nominated senior people must be natural persons (not a body corporate) and must be employed, contracted or otherwise engaged to work sufficient hours so that the individual can fulfil the senior person functions associated with the size and scope of the organisation's business.

The Civil Aviation Act requires the Director to be satisfied that the applicant is a 'fit and proper person' for the role. To help establish this, the CAA will assess each nominated person and interview them to establish their competence to perform their designated roles and to ensure the continued safety of the operation.

The candidate must, among other things, have an in-depth knowledge of the company exposition, a good working knowledge of the applicable rules and ACs, a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, and a positive attitude to safety.

## CAA Interview

In particular the CAA will gather information and explore the following areas during its recorded interview process, which will take about 90 minutes.

Following an initial review and discussion of the applicant's qualifications and experience, the candidate will be expected to be able to:

- » Describe how their experience and skills are relevant and applicable to the intended position
- » Give an accurate overview of their intended role
- » Explain their knowledge of the organisation, its activities and its exposition
- » Tell about their knowledge of the intended duties, their responsibilities and accountabilities and position description, and the extent of their authority to make decisions, including any financial authority
- » Explain what resources are available to them to fulfil their role
- » Describe the time they will dedicate to the role, and how any other commitments that could interfere with the exercise of their responsibility will be managed
- » Explain where they will be living in relation to the organisation's location, and whether this could impact on their ability to perform in the role
- » Demonstrate their knowledge of the applicable Act, Rule and AC requirements, and describe how the various sections apply to their intended position
- » Tell of their knowledge of applicable standards and best practices
- » Explain and demonstrate their attitude toward compliance and safety by their understanding of safety and risk, and how they intend to achieve good safety performance within their area of responsibilities
- » Describe how any potential conflicts of interest will be managed.

Usually within a few days, the CAA will review the outcome of the interview and complete any required follow up before providing the candidate with the results of its assessment. ■