



Talking Safety Management Systems

Please note: *This article pertains to the PTASP Final Rule currently in effect as of July 19, 2019, and statutory requirements in 49 U.S.C. 5329(d). It does not pertain to the [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking \(NPRM\) for PTASP](#) published on April 26, 2023, in the Federal Register.*¹

Safety communication is one of the requirements for the Safety Promotion component of a Safety Management System (SMS) under the PTASP regulation. Applicable transit agencies must “communicate safety and safety performance information throughout the agency’s organization” ([49 CFR 673.29\(b\)](#)).

Safety communication sets the tone for the agency and helps build a robust safety culture. It fosters improved safety performance by communicating the agency’s Safety Management Policy, as well as broader safety information, actions taken to resolve safety concerns and lessons learned.

Transit agencies that are subject to the PTASP regulation must communicate safety and safety performance information throughout the organization. These agencies must inform employees about hazards and safety risks related to their roles and responsibilities, as well as safety actions taken in response to reports submitted through the Employee Safety Reporting Programs (ESRP).

Considerations

When reviewing how your agency communicates about safety with your employees, consider the following:

- How can your agency enable the flow of formal safety communication, top-down and bottom-up?

¹ The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. Grantees and subgrantees should refer to FTA’s statutes and regulations for applicable requirements.

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Resources

- Talking SMS: Safety Communication Webinar: [Presentation](#) and [Recording](#)
- Making the Most of Your Employee Safety Reporting Program Webinar: [Presentation](#) and [Recording](#)
- [Employee Safety Reporting Program \(Part 1\)](#)
- [Employee Safety Reporting Program \(Part 2\): Methods and Implementation](#)
- [Employee Safety Reporting Program \(Part 3\): Encouraging Worker Participation](#)
- [Employee Safety Reporting Program \(Part 4\): Monitoring and Using ESRP Data](#)
- Safety Promotion ASP Section Lessons Learned Webinar: [Presentation](#) and [Recording](#)
- [Understanding PTASP Safety Training and Communication Requirements](#)



- Which mechanisms and means will ensure effective safety communication based on your agency’s organization, structure, and size of operations?
- What information do you need to communicate and when? How can you keep this information accurate and up to date?
- How can your agency ensure employees understand what is communicated to them and any actions they must take in response to the information?
 - How are you communicating with employees about safety concerns they report through your agency’s ESRP?
 - How can you communicate how your agency handles reports?
 - To whom are you communicating? All employees? Affected departments? Just the reporter?
 - How will you handle anonymous reports?

Examples of Safety Communication

The methods for communicating safety information vary based on an agency’s size. Options to consider include safety bulletins, mobile applications for frontline worker communications, newsletters, safety briefings, toolbox talks, meetings, and more.

Communicating Safety and Safety Performance Information



At a minimum:

The agency communicates throughout the organization the safety management policy, information on hazards and safety risks relevant to employees’ roles and responsibilities, and actions taken in response to ESRP reports.



Opportunities for flexibility:

The agency may consider providing this information through safety bulletins (sent via email, website, or paper) or assigning safety officers to conduct safety briefings for all employees.

Small agency example: The agency posts physical copies of safety bulletins in the break room, sends copies via email, and reviews this information during weekly all-hands meetings.

Large agency example: The agency posts safety information through an agency safety website, sends email alerts, puts up physical bulletins, and holds mandatory safety briefings.

Visit the [PTASP TAC Resource Library](#) for guides, fact sheets, and webinars on the PTASP regulation and safety training resources and information. Email PTASP-TAC@dot.gov for technical assistance with any PTASP-related topic.