



I am writing this a few days after the 2018 International System Safety Society Conference (ISSC) in Phoenix, Arizona. Attendance was once again down from “normal” — perhaps the hot weather was unappealing to many. If you didn’t have a chance to attend, I am sorry for you because you missed a great Conference. I think it was quite successful in terms of interesting papers, nice environment and general enthusiasm from everyone I talked with. I congratulate the Conference committee on putting together a seamless event. As far as I heard, it all worked out as planned, bringing much value (and fun) to us all.

My main focus during the Conference was on making sure that the Virtual Chapter’s suggestions for four Society initiatives received a fair hearing to determine whether to go forward with the ideas. The Executive Council and the people who attended our presentations were overwhelmingly in agreement that we brought good and valuable ideas that should be implemented by the International System Safety Society (ISSS) as a whole, rather than as independent actions of our small chapter.

These four initiatives are:

1. Create a “motherhood” standard that describes the key goals and elements of a system safety program as understood and promoted by members of the ISSS.
2. Assist university engineering departments with integrating system safety concepts into their existing classes and curricula, starting with Arizona State University but expanding to other colleges and universities in the future.
3. Work to create system safety courses for system safety engineers that reflect the goals and elements of the “motherhood” standard developed in the first initiative.
4. Create a means of certifying system safety engineers

as having the experience and expertise necessary to be fully qualified system safety engineers.

Each of these initiatives will take a lot of time and effort to accomplish. We obtained an initial list of members who have offered to assist, with the understanding that they are all volunteers with jobs, professions and other commitments limiting their availability to help. Our next steps will include forming committees, assisting the committees with setting up processes to do their work and opening lines of communication between the committees and the membership at large. There will undoubtedly be a short period of relative chaos while these committees sort themselves out.

It seems apparent that the most important initiative will be the first one on the list — the creation of a “motherhood” standard. I used the term “standard” in relation to this document, but perhaps it will end up in a different form, such as a guideline, white paper or some other form. Regardless of its final form, there are some key elements that must be included in the document. It must clearly describe what we mean by “system safety” and a “system safety program.” System safety consists of two main parts: a technical analysis aspect and a management aspect. We need to describe what is necessary and sufficient in these two aspects to have an effective system safety program. In my opinion, we don’t want to get into too much detail about how to do these things; rather, we want to be clear about what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and how we will measure success. These details are discussed at great length in various books and papers. If necessary, we can develop additional guidance documents in the future to discuss approaches and tools for accomplishing goals and tasks identified in our “standard.”

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contents of this standard to determine what to include in training, what to use to certify individuals and what needs to be understood by engineers and managers who interact with system safety engineers.

While the first initiative is of prime importance, there is no reason to wait until it is complete before starting work on the other initiatives. We have enough understanding of the profession to work on all of the other initiatives in parallel. However, we will likely find that there are overlapping and interacting elements of all four initiatives; none can be completed in a vacuum separate from the others. We will need to ensure that there is good communication between the working groups.

By the time you read this TBD, we will have taken the initial steps to form the working groups, as well as the steps required to ensure consistent understanding of the directions that we are heading. If you are interested — or compelled — to work on one or more of these committees, please step up and volunteer to help. There is more work here than can possibly be accomplished in a timely manner by the small group of volunteers currently offering to assist. ●



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