



AFAP SAFETY OCCURRENCE GUIDE

Supporting pilots through safety events · Version 1.6

ALPA Int'l CIRP: *"Of those pilots not receiving critical incident stress support, 60–70% left their aviation careers within two years of the incident."*

AFAP: *"Pilots who seek guidance within 3–4 days feel more certain about the process — and return to line with more confidence and generally quicker."*

0459 747 757

AFAP EMERGENCY 24/7

1300 307 912

AFAP MAP COUNSELLING 24/7

03 9928 5737

AFAP OFFICE (BUSINESS HOURS)

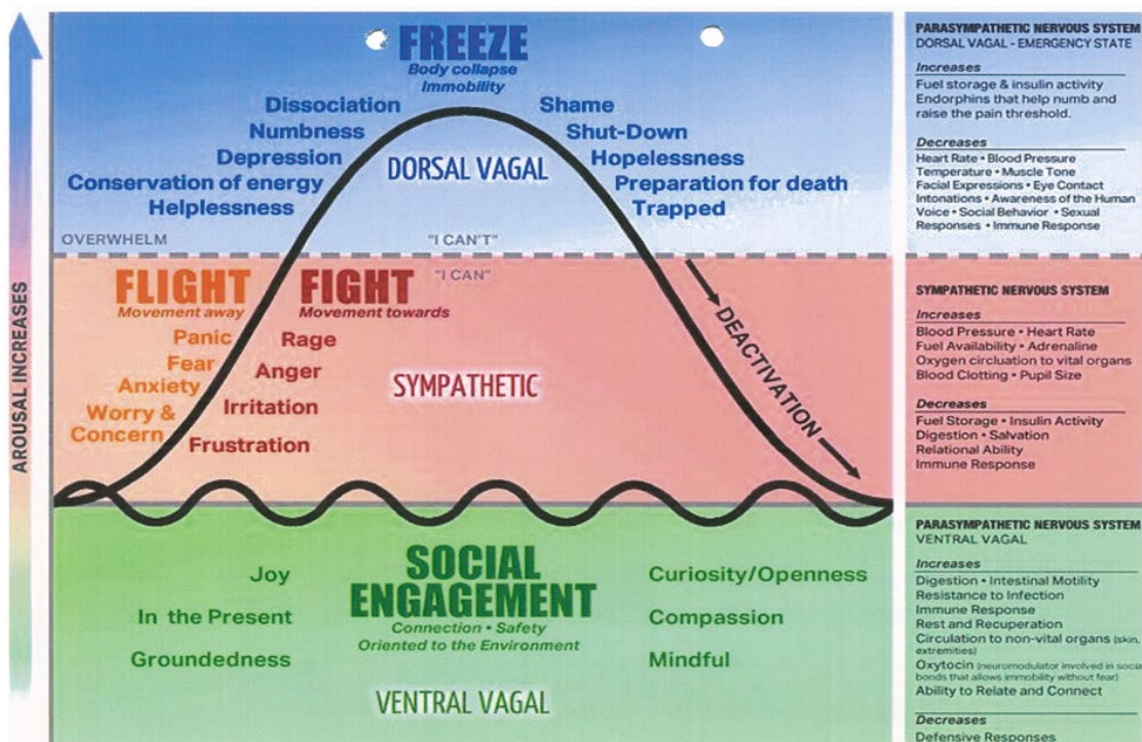
#1 Understanding Your Response

This guide helps you navigate the stress response, safety process, and path back to normal duties following a safety event, incident or accident.

Why this happens: By the time the conscious mind makes sense of a reaction, the body has already responded. The limbic system can override the prefrontal cortex — this survival state can be triggered not just by the event itself, but also by a call from safety, an ATSB notification, viewing the animation, or attending a training meeting weeks later.

Other common triggers: being injured during a layover or commute · aggression or unlawful interference · in-flight emergencies (engine fire, stall) · loss of control in severe weather · sudden death of a colleague · simulator malfunctions · loss of medical certification.

Fight / Flight / Freeze: A stress response can present as Fight or Flight. If a pilot does not return from either, they can progress into the Freeze response — which can affect progress and resolution.



When the limbic system detects a threat, the sympathetic nervous system triggers a survival response that can override the prefrontal cortex. Polyvagal framework.

#2 Common Reactions (ALPA Int'l CIRP)

These responses are normal and temporary — they manifest differently for each individual, from immediately after the event to months later. Getting support early is key to assisting a return to line.

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioural
· Chest tightness · Dizziness · Fast breathing · Headaches · Nausea · Sleep problems · Rapid heartbeat	· Confusion · Difficulty deciding · Hypervigilance · Intrusive memories · Seeing event on repeat · Memory problems	· Anxiety / Fear · Guilt / Shame · Feeling isolated · Intense anger · Irritability · Wanting to hide	· Alcohol increase · Antisocial actions · Emotional outbursts · Inability to rest · Relationship problems · Withdrawal

#3 Immediate Actions

STEP 1	Complete the AFAP Accident & Incident (A&I) Checklist (available here) Protect people and get to safety · Contact the AFAP · Comply with DAMP · Comply with reporting obligations · See a doctor (physical and psychological)
STEP 2	Continue reading this Safety Occurrence Guide. Understand the ongoing safety process, your rights, and what to expect from each meeting.

#4 Navigating the Process

Do you need AFAP support?

No — you can proceed alone. However, AFAP experience shows that pilots who appear settled in a meeting may still be having a stress response. Pilots who seek guidance from AFAP within 3–4 days feel more certain about the process, which supports an expeditious return to line. Pilots who elect to go through alone often end up contacting AFAP later when return to line has become more challenging.

AFAP support person

Operators adhering to Positive Safety Culture (PSC) principles welcome a support person and invite it as normal process. The ATSB also encourages taking a support person. Having a single point of contact before and after a meeting helps manage stress during the meeting.

NOTE: Some operators may not adhere to best-practice PSC behaviours. By contacting AFAP, you introduce a countermeasure to assist in mitigating undesirable operator responses.

Communicating — facts only

There will be information unknown to you at this point. The survival response will tempt you to figure everything out and solve it immediately, rather than let the safety investigation take its normal course. Resist this. State only what you know to be true. No speculation as to why it occurred.

► *OBs: WLM 8.1 Self-control · COM 2.3 Accurate communication · SAW 7.1 Situational assessment (see #7 below)*

IRM Reporting

If an Immediately Reportable Matter applies, notify the ATSB as soon as reasonably practical: 1800 011 034 (International: +61 2 6230 4470). A detailed written report is also required within 72 hours. Pilots must agree to a DAMP test if directed.

#5 The Meetings

Company / Operator Meeting

Just Culture (James Reason model): Just Culture, Reporting Culture, Learning Culture, Informed Culture, Flexible Culture. Generally, where there is no malicious intent or reckless behaviour, you are more likely to be coached through the human error or "at-risk" behaviour.

Animations: Derived from available flight data. A great learning tool — however, minor variations are possible. The experience can create a stress response due to a difference in recollections. This is normal. Anticipate it and take time to absorb what is presented.

The contemporary PSC company meeting can result in any action from just a conversation to further training and changes to SOPs. Any extra training can only be a bonus. The event can become part of your experience toolkit, not something that defines you.

► OBs: COM 2.3 Accurate communication · PSD 6.1 Identifies threats · WLM 8.1 Self-control (see #7 below)

ATSB Meeting

The ATSB is not to be feared. The focus and outcome is about safety, not blame — covered by the Transport Safety Investigation Act. The pilot and all attendees sign a s62 — exact contents of the ATSB meeting are not disclosed to anyone outside the meeting for the duration of the investigation.

► OBs: LTW 5.8 Accepts responsibility · PSD 6.7 Reviews decisions · PSD 6.9 Demonstrates resilience (see #7 below)

CASA Meeting

CASA is the regulating authority. If a CASA meeting is not mandatory, AFAP legal officers will recommend the best course of action. Most operational events focus on prevention unless the action was deemed reckless or intentional.

#6 Self-Care & Support Networks

For You

Give yourself permission to feel off — tired, numb, or on edge are all common.

- Avoid major decisions in the immediate period
- Maintain basic routines where possible
- Watch for lingering symptoms

If intrusive thoughts or strong emotional swings do not ease after 2–3 weeks, reach out to AFAP or MAP.

For Families

Adapted from ALPA Int'l CIRP — MAP also assists families and partners: 1300 307 912

- Be present and listen without giving advice or trying to fix things
- Accept emotions without judgement
- Help in practical ways
- Avoid clichés: "it could have been worse" or "you should be over this by now"
- Look after yourself too

#7 Observable Behaviours & ICAO Competencies

The ~70 Observable Behaviours (OBs) are the building blocks of safe, consistent pilot performance, grouped into the ICAO competencies. Competency Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) was formally introduced via ICAO's PANS-TRG in 2006, evolving with Evidence-Based Training (EBT) in 2013.

Competencies are formed from OBs. To effectively delegate tasks (OB 8.5 WLM), improving OB 2.6 "asks relevant and effective questions" (COM) may be the root observable behaviour. Identifying the root OB is like finding the small hinge that swings the big door.

"When we run out of procedures, all we have left are our behaviours."
— Johanna Hooper, Resilient Pilot Performance Coach

Every person within the safety management system reports to someone. The safety team reports to flight operations, who must report to the board. It is up to the pilot to demonstrate acceptance, learning, and a change in behaviour — and to demonstrate this in 60–90 minutes in a meeting. How it is articulated is therefore important for the whole system.

Domain	Code	Key Observable Behaviours
Leadership & Teamwork	LTW	5.1 Encourages participation · 5.2 Demonstrates initiative · 5.5 Gives/receives feedback · 5.7 Decisive leadership · 5.8 Accepts responsibility · 5.10 Intervention strategies
Communication	COM	2.1 Recipient ready · 2.3 Conveys messages clearly · 2.4 Confirms understanding · 2.5 Listens actively · 2.6 Asks effective questions · 2.8 Non-verbal · 2.10 Datalink messages
Problem Solving & Decision Making	PSD	6.1 Identifies threats · 6.2 Seeks accurate information · 6.3 Identifies what went wrong · 6.4 Perseveres safely · 6.7 Reviews and adapts · 6.8 Adapts beyond guidance · 6.9 Demonstrates resilience

Situation Awareness	SAW	7.1 Monitors aeroplane state · 7.2 Energy state · 7.3 General environment · 7.4 Validates accuracy · 7.5 Awareness of people · 7.6 Contingency plans · 7.7 Responds to reduced SA
Workload Management	WLM	8.1 Self-control · 8.2 Plans and prioritises · 8.3 Manages time · 8.5 Delegates tasks · 8.6 Seeks assistance · 8.7 Cross-checks actions · 8.9 Manages interruptions

#8 PSC Mapping — Behaviours Connecting to Safety Culture

Consider how the five elements of Positive Safety Culture each connect directly to pilot observable behaviours. Your conduct during and after a safety event contributes to all five pillars.



The five elements of Positive Safety Culture — each directly connected to pilot observable behaviours.

PSC Theme	Pilot Observable Behaviours	In a Safety Event
Psychological Safety	LTW 5.1 · LTW 5.5 · LTW 5.10	Enables honest articulation without defensive distortion
Threat & Error Management	SAW 7.1–7.6 · PSD 6.1 · PSD 6.4	Demonstrating threat recognition reduces punitive framing
Learning & Feedback	PSD 6.7 · PSD 6.9	Behavioural reflection demonstrates system contribution
Fair Accountability	LTW 5.8 · COM 2.3	Clear articulation supports the upward reporting chain
Leadership & Role Modelling	LTW 5.7 · WLM 8.1 · LTW 5.2	Your conduct models safety professionalism
Organisational Learning	PSD 6.8 · PSD 6.3	Your articulation contributes to system evolution

Appendix Safety I and Safety II

In the context of a post-safety or performance event, it is useful to understand our own behaviours to assist in navigating the process. The Safety I column focuses on "litigate and regulate" whereas Safety II demonstrates "trust, train and verify".

Table adapted from Erik Hollnagel, Safety-I and Safety II: The Past and Future of Safety Management.

	SAFETY I	SAFETY II
Definition of Safety	As few things as possible go wrong	As many things as possible go right
Safety Management	Reactive — responds to unacceptable risk	Proactive — anticipates developments/events
Attitude to Human Factor	Can be seen as a liability or hazard	Seen as a resource of flexibility and resilience
Performance Variability	Harmful — should be prevented & reduced	Useful — should be monitored & managed

IF YOU HAVE A SAFETY EVENT — CALL THE AFAP IMMEDIATELY

0459 747 757 AFAP Emergency 24/7

1300 307 912 AFAP MAP Counselling 24/7 **03 9928 5737** AFAP Office