EFFECTIVE AUDIT ANALYSIS AND FOLLOW UP

One statement found within the Air Carrier Management section of the DOD Quality and Safety Requirements reads "*audit results are **analyzed** in order to determine the cause, not just the symptom of any deficiency.*" What is the goal of an effective audit program? How do you ensure audit programs reach that goal? Are corrective actions actually solving the problems? These questions can be answered by good audit analysis, complimented by an effective follow-up system.

Here are some items that should be taken into consideration when reviewing discrepancies:

Criticality: How critical is the discrepancy? Does it concern a safety of flight item? Does it involve a violation of a regulation, company policies or procedures? Does this discrepancy tie in with other identified discrepancies and change the criticality of the concern? The more critical the concern, the greater the urgency should be, to put corrective actions in place. Also, the monitoring of these actions should be continuous until it is determined that they were effective.

Repeat/recurring: Has it been identified that this is a repeat or recurring discrepancy? Have past corrective actions been reviewed to see why they did not work? It is incumbent upon the auditor to ensure the appropriate level of management responsible for corrective actions clearly understands the concerns. This manager should carefully analyze repeat/recurring discrepancies, allocate necessary resources for proper corrective actions, and continuously monitor to ensure the corrective actions taken are effective. To meet these requirements there should be a system in place that advocates good analysis of audit findings. This system should apply to **all** audits; internal, fuel, station, vendor, and others required by the company.

Location: Where was the discrepancy found? Was it at the main base, out station, or vendor? Determining the location will assist in determining what resources are going to be needed in eliminating the discrepancy. Will a follow-up audit be required? If it is a vendor, have they been cooperative in resolving issues in the past?

Responsibility: Who is responsible to ensure that the correct actions are taken to eliminate the discrepancies? Does the individual know that they are responsible and have they been given the authority to fix it? Do they have the correct resources at hand or the authority to obtain the correct resources to eliminate the discrepancies? Do they have the time to monitor the corrective actions taken, or will they require assistance from others? Are they geographically separated from the location of the discrepancies?

Management involvement: Has the proper level of management been notified of the discrepancies? Are they being kept current on the corrective actions taken to eliminate the discrepancies, and are they dedicated to committing the resources needed?

Audit Follow-up: To compliment audit analysis, an effective follow-up program is necessary. Timelines for following up discrepancies are typically agreed upon by the company auditor and the manager of the department/vendor who has been audited. Some examples of dates worthy of tracking by both parties include: response due dates, time extensions, and the date corrective actions are to be implemented. There is an agreement between the two individuals that by a certain date, the problem will be corrected. Additionally, if an extension is required, the auditor is notified before the due date. Repeat discrepancies should be elevated to ensure a higher level of management is aware of the discrepancy. The follow-up tracking system can be either computer or manually based, and must allow the auditor a way to easily track, update, and identify overdue dates. Since some corrective actions are not quick fixes, the audit follow-up system should track timelines and milestones for corrective actions that require long term implementation.

These are just some of the items that need to be taken into account when analyzing audit results. Effective audit analysis and follow-up will help eliminate repeat/recurring discrepancies, and prevent negative trends from gaining a foothold.