



POST-PANDEMIC RISK MANAGEMENT RESOURCE

The shutdowns and interruptions to normal operations for all industries due to COVID-19 have been overwhelming. Transportation has been particularly hard hit, as nearly all travel has come to a standstill over the last few months. Businesses and workers who have experienced anything from a moderate slowdown to a complete shutdown are anxious to get back to some sense of normal, in whatever form that might now take.

Aviation will not get back to 100% overnight. There are wide-ranging expert predictions that show it could take anywhere from one to five years to regain early-2020 status for the general aviation and airline industries. Thankfully, there does appear to be a glimmer of light at the end of this tunnel, as restrictions are being cautiously lifted at both the state and national level.

We all want to see the aviation community bounce back in a tremendous way, and to do so just as quickly as possible. But we also want to ensure the transition back to normal is as safe and efficient as possible for all involved. How quickly we can return to “normal” is indeed yet to be determined, but AssuredPartners Aerospace wants to make sure your operation is ready for that return when it happens.

Something all businesses need to be cautious of during this time is the currency and competency levels of returning employees. Following what may have been a two- or three-month break from normal duties, those employees may be rusty in their skills and thinking. Asking such well-rested individuals to jump directly back into their old routines can create hazards for themselves, their coworkers, and customers. This is particularly problematic if a business is trying to make up for lost time, asking their workers to jump back in at 110%.

A quick glance at the rates of Worker’s Compensation claims over the past 20 years shows that the only time the U.S. experienced an increase in the frequency of these claims was in 2010. That was when the country was emerging from the recessionary years of 2008 and 2009, and people were eager to get back to work. However, a price was paid in the form of higher incident rates, time away from work due to injuries, and some increased insurance rates.

Perhaps most important is for businesses to comply with recommendations from organizations such as the CDC on [best practices for sanitation and other risk mitigation efforts](#). The CDC also has specific worker safety guidance for some segments of the aviation industry, [including aircraft maintenance workers](#). The

National Air Transportation Association (NATA) is forming a Part 135 COVID-19 Task Force that will dive more specifically into implementing the CDC's best practices for business aviation (<https://www.nata.aero/advocacy/coronavirus>). We highly encourage all aviation personnel to review these resources in detail to best protect yourselves from the harmful effects of COVID-19 itself.

To prepare for a return to a pre-pandemic operational cadence, ensure your business and employees are ready to tackle their normal duties, free from both mental and physical interference. For some specially-trained employees such as pilots, mechanics, and line service personnel, the solution may be obvious: recurrent training – both immediately and on an ongoing basis.

Professional pilots coming off extended downtime should first step into a simulator or aircraft along with a current instructor pilot to do at minimum a review of systems, checklists, and emergency procedures. This should be tailored to each pilot's individual situational needs, as well as conform with all company and FAA rules or guidelines.

Of course, these same principals apply just as much to the casual weekend flyer who may be antsy to get back in the air, perhaps for the first time this year. The [FAA WINGS proficiency program](#) is an excellent resource that can be utilized from a home computer to brush up on various procedures, regulations, and skills. Many resources are available virtually and the FAA programs are typically free so they can be utilized now, not as a cram session before your next flight.

Equally important to a sharp pilot is having an aircraft in good working order. AssuredPartners recently published an article detailing [how to keep up with maintenance on your aircraft during a downtime](#) so that it's ready when you are.

Line service personnel may find the NATA Safety 1st or another similar computer-based program the best way to brush up on proper ground handling and fueling procedures. Line service managers can also take a more hands-on approach by implementing some on-the-job refresher training with the more unpracticed employees. A simple demo of tow bar techniques, fueling operations, and general towing procedures can go a long way to ensuring those skills remain sharp for incident-free operations.

Many FBOs report that some egregious ground handling errors they have experienced are when workloads are low, and there is a certain complacency amongst the staff. For example, if the Superbowl is in town, and it's an "all hands-on deck" mentality, minds and bodies are sharp and constantly working. If you instead see only two or three business jet arrivals through the course of a day, the staff will likely be operating with a more relaxed attitude. Be cautious of those situations over the coming months or years, taking quick action when you see it to avoid the sometimes-severe consequences.

The initial return to duties might represent a new short-term workplace hazard for some, but it is important to also recognize how an extended reduced workload environment can affect all employees. Even for office and support personnel operating in a lower risk and less physically-demanding environment, the mental and emotional drain of these recent events can be equally taxing on performance.

Economical and social anxieties will persist through all levels, and what these employees may need most to perform at peak levels is simply the reassurance that they and their job are safe. Companies who have gone through unfortunate rounds of layoffs can expect reduced morale amongst those who just lost coworkers and friends to those cuts. The recognition and addressing of these unique staff stressors will go a long way to a successful recovery.

Aviation professionals are keenly aware of the inherent risks and dangers resulting from complacency in our industry. These lessons are taught in every classroom, ground school, or flight lesson we encounter. Recognizing the operational pitfalls of this pandemic, and our hopeful return to more normal operations, requires a proper risk analysis of your specific needs in getting back to work or in the air. AssuredPartners is here to help with these transitions to ensure a successful outcome and has compiled a variety of resources related to the coronavirus. [Click here](#) to visit the resource center or reach out to your AssuredPartners broker for more information. We are all stronger together.