



BUILDING A SECURITY CULTURE

ICAO has declared 2021 “The Year of Security Culture” saying that security is *everyone’s* responsibility. What does that mean for you as a New Zealand aviation participant?

Every year between 2008 and 2019, the Global Peace Index¹ ranked New Zealand as either the second or third most peaceful country in the world.

In March 2019, after New Zealand was again ranked the second most-peaceful country (behind Iceland), a gunman shot dead 51 people and injured 40 others at two mosques in Christchurch.

So we all know that despite being a generally tranquil country, New Zealand is not immune to acts of extremism, terrorism or other significant security risks.

Around the world, several would-be attacks have been thwarted in the planning and reconnaissance stage by ‘ordinary’ people who were uneasy about something they were witnessing, and reported it.

And now, as ICAO’s Year of Security Culture unfolds, New Zealand aviation participants are being called on to play the same role.

“Individuals *can* make a difference,” says CAA’s manager of security regulation, David Willing. “And this campaign is about empowering individuals to look out for and report behaviour they think looks suspicious.”

The New Zealand Government says all New Zealanders have a responsibility to do so.

Its *Protecting Our Crowded Places from Attack* strategy says, “Everyone who works in, or uses, a crowded place should be aware of their surroundings and report suspicious or unusual behaviour to authorities.”

“Of course, not all odd-looking behaviour is a sign of planned terrorism or criminal activity,” says David. “But we would urge people to err on the side of caution and report anything they’re unsure about, rather than ignore something that could be the marker of a tragedy to come.

“Often people feel it’s not their role to report anything out of the ordinary, or no-one will take any notice of

¹ The index is produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, a Sydney-based global think tank. It works with various UN agencies and the OECD.

what they say, or they don't know what to do about what they've seen. They may feel embarrassed about raising a concern or think they could be reprimanded for 'wasting people's time'.

"We want that to change. We want every single person in the civil aviation system to feel like it is up to them and they feel comfortable mentioning something they feel is a bit odd."

In people's minds, large airports and aircraft may be the most obvious or visible places for a security threat but it could be anywhere and at any time, says David.

"Remember, the 9/11 pilots trained in ordinary provincial flight schools. Those trainee pilots demonstrated some suspicious behaviours as they trained, but before the 9/11 attacks, we weren't as aware of threats to aviation.

"But now we *are* aware, and each of us has a personal responsibility for aviation security.

"Even a report with no particular significance at the time may prove vital later on, if similar reports come in, or circumstances change. So if you see something or hear something, report it."

The role of organisations

For their part, says David, aviation organisations – from airports to aero clubs – should be planning a robust security culture where individuals are aware of their role in security, and feel comfortable reporting.

Organisations don't have to start from the beginning. The fundamentals should already be there.

"Potentially, the most under-utilised resource available to security managers," says Australia's *A guide to developing and implementing a Suspicious Activity Identification Program at airports*, "is the eyes and ears of employees and visitors to their facilities."

The program says the use of trained employees going about their normal duties makes building and maintaining a security culture low-cost.

And New Zealand's crowded places strategy says the measures to protect organisations from attack or criminal activity are similar to those reducing the risk from natural disasters, which operators will already have in place.

"Owners and operators ... should, therefore, make use of existing plans and methods for safeguarding their locations," the strategy says.

Certificated organisations that have gone through the safety management systems process will recognise many of the same elements in a security culture:

- Management leading by example and genuinely committing to that culture.
- Training employees in keeping security in the forefront of their minds.
- Regularly communicating about security plans.
- Making reporting easy.
- Supporting individuals who report, even if they have to admit to a mistake.
- Replying quickly to reports, and acting promptly on them.

"We want every single person to know how to report," says David, "and to be confident their report will be well-received by the organisation – even if the incident turns out to be innocuous."

The crowded places strategy says that having a robust security culture has benefits other than preventing an organisation being attacked, or subjected to other criminal activity.

It can "reduce the damage caused by an attack and enable its owner and operator to resume business-as-usual activities more quickly".

Some of the benefits, says David, become evident only when the absence of a good security regime allows an attack.

"Even an attempted attack can affect confidence in the operator, the aviation sector, or even the country.

"Because of the high visibility of our current prime minister and the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the news of any extremist attack in New Zealand would go around the world – as it did after the Christchurch attacks – potentially affecting our global reputation.

"Any attack would affect the country's transport networks, and have serious implications for our trade, and our economy.

"It's our duty as individual citizens to do what we can to prevent that happening.

"Otherwise, we'll never see it coming." 🛑

// MORE INFORMATION

For specifics on building a security culture, go to [police.govt.nz](https://www.police.govt.nz) and search for 'crowded places strategy'; or [icao.int](https://www.icao.int) and search for 'suspicious activity identification program'.