

# Band-Aid Safety

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Let's face it, safety is going to cost money. However, all safety professionals know that a proactive approach to safety is an investment rather than a cost (with easily quantifiable ROI). It will always be less expensive to prevent incidents and accidents from happening in the first place than to reactively clean up the mess after they happen. Accidents can be quite costly, and in some cases, as history has shown, can even put an airline (or any type of aviation company) out of business.

Over the years there have been, and continue to be, preventable incidents and accidents attributed to safety lapses. Many of these companies put profit over safety. Their practical drift tends to “lean to the right side boundary of [the safety space](#).” See figure below.



Many times, companies try to patch up safety issues with band-aids (metaphorically speaking of course). Companies may view band-aids as the path of least resistance as well as the quickest, easiest, and cheapest fix to their safety problems. These band-aids are generally propagated at the managerial level, with negative implications for operational personnel. Here are a few examples of band-aid safety:

- **Maintenance Scenario-**

- There has been a trend involving aircraft maintenance engineers skipping required steps during various maintenance procedures. With no (or inadequate) formal investigations conducted, the company's band-aid is to *fire the erring engineers*, as if that will solve the root cause.

**Problem: We know the *what* but we don't know the *why*.**

- **Flight Operations Scenario-**

- Flight Data Monitoring (FDM) analysis has been indicating a high rate of unstabilized approaches into XYZ airport. The company's band-aid is to *issue a memo* to all pilots stating that additional vigilance should be exercised when flying approaches into XYZ airport.

**Problem: We know the *what* but we don't know the *why*.**

- **Manufacturing Scenario-**

- One of the most recent and poignant examples of a band-aid scenario is the ongoing safety and quality issues happening at Boeing. This is a company that has dug itself so deeply into dysfunction that only a major organizational overhaul will be an effective solution. And yet, a few months ago, Boeing decided (reactively of course) that it should have an all hands on deck safety

standdown day, as if this would somehow be the solution to the ongoing rigmarole. Sadly, at this point, that was just a band-aid for an organizational situation that clearly needs a tourniquet. The safety standdown was basically just eye candy for stakeholders and the media. It's effectiveness was too little, too late. You cannot fix deeply-rooted organizational failures by putting on a good show and having employees hold hands and sing kumbaya.

**Problem: We know the *what* and, in this case, we know the *why*...*Excessive profit-driven management pressuring employees to produce as many aircraft as possible, as fast as possible, to stay competitive with its main competitor (Airbus). When this happens, tasks will be rushed, steps will be skipped, inspections will be slack, and corners will be cut. This has led to safety and quality lapses that have put the company in a very dangerous situation. A major overhaul is required.***

Other band-aids include:

- Admonish an employee to never make the same mistake again
- Give the employee a few days off without pay (as punishment, even if not at fault)
- Send the employee for additional training (even if training was not the issue)

The bottom line is that you need to determine root causes and employ corrective/preventive actions to ensure safety. Band-aids might work for a period of time, but in some cases a tourniquet is required to stop the bleeding, or else the company may wind up bleeding out.

*Dr. Bob Baron conducts aviation safety training, consulting, and program implementation for aviation operators on a global basis.*

*Sensitive and knowledgeable about various cultures, Dr. Baron uses his 36+ years of academic and practical experience to assist aviation organizations in their pursuit of safety and quality excellence. He has extensive experience working with developing nations and island countries. He also provides training and consulting to some of the largest airlines and aircraft manufacturers in the world, as well as civil aviation authorities and accident investigation bureaus.*

*If your aviation organization is interested in improving its culture, implementing programs such as Human Factors, SMS, SSP, or LOSA, or have an external, unbiased safety audit/Gap analysis, please get in touch.*

*Dr. Baron's company, TACG, provides numerous training, consulting, and auditing services. For more information, please go to <https://www.tacgworldwide.com>*