Internal Audit Report Highlights

Airport Safety Management System (SMS) Internal Controls

Why We Did This Audit

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), through the Department of Infrastructure, operates twenty-seven airports. The Airport Safety Management System (SMS) program is designed to manage safety risks and ensure airport operations are conducted safely and efficiently.

Why Our Findings Matter

Airport SMS programs matter because they provide a structured, proactive approach to managing safety risks, ultimately enhancing overall aviation safety and operational efficiency. By maintaining a robust SMS program, airports can identify hazards, assess risks, and implement preventative measures, leading to fewer incidents and accidents, improved compliance with regulations, and a stronger safety culture.

What We Looked At

Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs) outline the requirements of an Airport SMS program. We assessed the effectiveness of the internal controls and processes applicable to safety oversight, training, and quality assurance (Sections 3 - 5 of CARs).

What We Found

The GNWT's Airport SMS program has a strong internal control environment with opportunities to improve areas related to:

- Clarity in the SMS Manual
- Oversight and documentation of training for key airport personnel
- Information integrity in AIRMAN – the accident/incident reporting database

Recommendations

We recommended that the Department of Infrastructure:

- Review and update airport operating plans
- Clarify job responsibilities and segregation of duties in the SMS Manual
- Track, monitor, and expand training opportunities and succession planning
- Assess AIRMAN's ongoing usability
- Develop an oversight process to ensure entries into AIRMAN are appropriate and timely.

The Department of Infrastructure agreed with all recommendations and is taking steps to implement improvements. Work to mitigate the risks should be completed by the next audit cycle (March 2027).

Conclusion

The SMS program effectively manages safety risks and complies with regulatory requirements. Improving documentation and enhancing oversight will help mitigate operational risks.