We have conducted numerous studies on ORM and its effectiveness in the fleet, and have a firm grasp on in-depth and deliberate-level ORM actions. However, when it comes to time critical risk management (TCRM) — when time and resources are limited — we are lacking. Why? Our surveys and assessments determined that the five steps are too complicated for on-the-fly application.

**How did we fix the situation?** Read the full article.

**More on the science behind TCRM**

We interviewed Ms. KD VanDrie, developer of the Volant Model. She talks about the Volant Model Icon and how its processes and tools can improve performance.

**NSC: How critical is it for leaders and supervisors to apply these principles toward minimizing risk and accomplishing the mission?**

**KVD:** Risk management is about meeting mission requirements: defining goals, establishing operational priorities, balancing available resources, providing clear guidance, and then monitoring the results for continued improvement. In other words, risk management is leadership. Applying the principles of risk management is absolutely critical for anyone who wants to effectively lead people. The ABCD Loop is one illustration of how a good leader would use risk management to encourage their team to their best results.

**Assess:** Analyzing the mission requirements doesn’t just help set goals and benchmarks, it is also important to determine the points of possible failure.

**Balance:** Balancing success and payoff against the odds and severity of failure cut right to the heart of risk management. When weighing the success and payoff against the odds and severity of failure, it is important to take stock of what resources you have available and what resources you can use.

**Communicate:** A good leader knows that communication needs to go both ways to be most effective. Knowing where in the Green, Yellow, or Red the leader and team is will dictate how directive these communications must be.

**Do and Debrief:** The Debrief is very important to leaders, whether you have succeeded or failed. Obviously you’d run one in the case of failure to determine which resources didn’t work or were absent and how to remedy that. Debriefing with success gives you a chance to cement what worked well and to commend deserving team members. Its effectiveness can create expertise.

**NSC: Why is it vital to standardize risk management? Does redundancy help maintain standardization?**

**KVD:** Standardization does two things: it forces us to thoroughly think through a problem and develop a solution that can be applied across the board. Standardization via well defined policies, processes, procedures and flows keeps us from having to remake a new decision every time it is encountered.
NSC: For organizations or individuals who are susceptible to low-probability, high-impact events that are impossible to forecast, what can they do during the in-depth or deliberation stage to limit their exposure?

KVD: In more unpredictable operations, there needs to also be clear and concrete guiding principles and operational priorities: whether it’s a philosophy, a mission statement, or commander’s intent, people working in dynamic situations need that foundation. In addition to the goal you’re aiming for, it is just as valuable to know where the hard boundaries are that cannot be crossed, i.e. make risk decisions at the right level.

The ABCD Model

The ABCD Model, derived from the Volant Model Icon provides a visualization of the processes and tools that improve performance.

- The Red-Yellow-Green “target” represents risk. We consider risk anything you do not want to have happen. It could be physical risk, financial risk, the risk of hurting a relationship, or simply the risk of not succeeding in you goals.
- The blocks represent the resources you have to improve your performance or to reduce risk.
- The ABCD is the continuous process that we would like you to adopt as a life-long habit. It is designed to improve Situational Awareness, Decision Making, and Communications. It also includes the most important step: reflection of your performance for continuous improvement.

The Target: The target is an indicator of how much risk you are facing.

- In the Green, you have good situational awareness. You are keenly aware of what is happening around you, are able to see how changes may impact what you are trying to accomplish, and can project the outcome into the future and recognize how it aligns with your goals. This is a good place to be: errors will be caught and dealt with easily, resources are in place to reduce your workload or help you catch errors, communications with other people are open.
- In the Yellow, gaps in your situational awareness, an increase in risk factors or lack of resources creates holes that increase the potential for error. Depending on how you balance risk with your overall objectives, this may mean it is time to re-prioritize.
- In the Red, there is a danger of serious error or not accomplishing your objectives. In the Red there is also a danger that situational awareness has focused down into tunnel vision. Being in the Red is an indication you may need to re-evaluate the goals.

The Resource Blocks: The resource blocks are the tools you have to improve operational effectiveness and reduce risk. Using multiple “blocks” creates redundancy to stop an error chain.

Red: Policies, Procedures, and Flows
Green: Checklists and Job Aids
Blue: Automation
Yellow: Other People
Grey: Knowledge, Skills, and Techniques

The ABCDs: The ABCDs are the actions to be performed to improve operational effectiveness and reduce risk. This integrates the need for continuous improvement with three fundamental leadership skills: situational awareness, decision making and communication.

- Assess: Assess the situation, Where are you in the target? In the Green, Yellow, or Red? What is happening around you? What risk factors do you have to consider? How will it impact the future? This is situational awareness.
- Balance: Balance refers to the decision making that must be accomplished. How much time is available? What are the operational priorities? How can I better manage the workload? What resources could help?
- Communicate: Regular and systematic communications are part of the ABCD loop. Who has more information? Who can help? Who needs to know?
- Do & Debrief: Evaluate the result of your actions to improve future performance.