



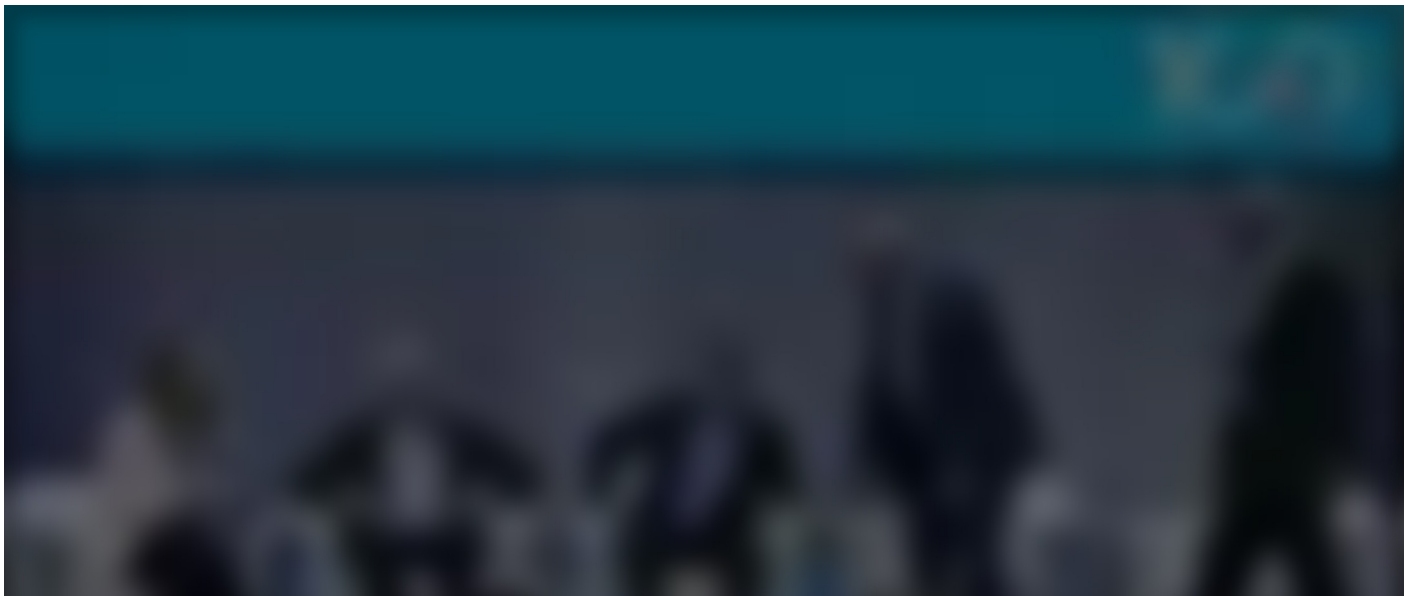
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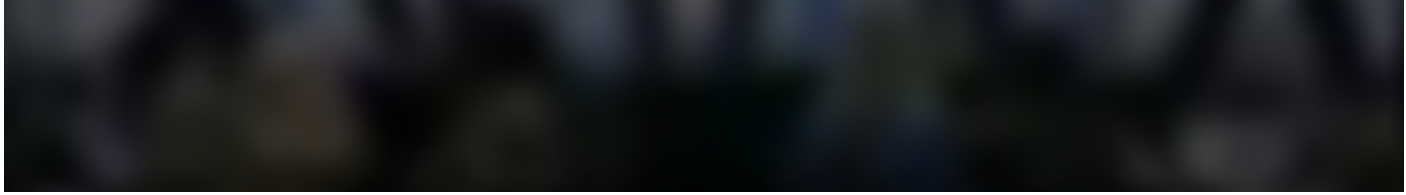
## Industry leaders reflect on the next era of aviation safety at the 2026 SMS Industry Forum

2026-05-01

FORT WORTH, Texas — Collaboration, transparency and evolving technology took center stage on the final day of the 2026 Safety Management System (SMS) Industry Forum.

The day opened with a panel discussion featuring Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Deputy Administrator Chris Rocheleau, American's Chief Operating Officer David Seymour, President and CEO of Commercial Engines & Services at GE Aerospace Mohamed Ali and CEO of Dallas Fort Worth International Airport Chris McLaughlin. Panelists agreed that open dialogue and events like the SMS Forum are essential to strengthening safety in an industry that continues to evolve.





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Rocheleau, Seymour, Ali and McLaughlin described the state of aviation safety as strong, crediting increased collaboration across the industry. “We’re all thinking the same way,” Seymour said. “And I think that’s important. That’s not where we were 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, as we’ve evolved.”

Rocheleau emphasized that safety progress is ongoing. “We’re constantly looking for opportunities to make the system even safer,” noting the FAA’s recent efforts to further integrate safety functions across the agency.

Leadership and culture were core themes throughout the discussion. Panelists reinforced that effective SMS programs are grounded in transparency and trust. “If you can’t see a problem, you can’t solve it,” Ali said, highlighting the importance of structure and culture and the need for environments where team members feel empowered to speak up.

The conversation also highlighted the industry’s ongoing efforts for proactive safety management and noted the opportunities for the use of artificial intelligence to identify risks and to support decision making.

Panelists also called for a deeper interconnection across organizations, including more formalized ways to share data. “That kind of joint ownership of a problem is how we get to the best solutions,” McLaughlin said

Thursday’s panel was moderated by Sarah Jantz, American’s Managing Director of Operations Communications.

Since 2015, the annual SMS Industry Forum brings together more than 400 safety leaders each year to share insights and strengthen collaboration across the aviation industry.

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U.S. DOT SECRETARY SEAN DUFFY  
OPENS THE 11TH ANNUAL SMS  
INDUSTRY FORUM

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, 4:45 p.m.

FORT WORTH, Texas — American Airlines CEO Robert Isom and U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy opened



the 11th annual Safety Management System (SMS) Industry Forum with a fireside chat focused on the state of aviation safety in 2026. The conversation marked the first time a cabinet secretary has addressed the SMS Industry Forum, and it set the tone for the multiday event that brings together safety leaders from across the transportation sector.



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Both Isom and Duffy highlighted that aviation safety remains strong and is a top priority across the transportation system, highlighting that continuous improvement is driven by strong collaboration between government, regulators and aviation companies.

Duffy outlined the Department of Transportation's focus on modernizing the nation's air traffic control system, noting ongoing efforts to retain and recruit qualified air traffic controllers, and that a \$12.5 billion federal investment is already underway to upgrade infrastructure.

"We're going to make this the best, but the safest system in the world," Duffy said. "I've got a team that rallies around that. It's true, if you don't have safety, you don't have the business. It's about being smart in how we think about the risk and the upgrades, all with the safety of the American people in the back of our minds."

Both leaders acknowledged the fast pace of innovation in the transportation and aviation space. While embracing

new technology is essential, Duffy reaffirmed that innovation can never come at the expense of safety.