President's Message
From the Executive Vice President

by Robert Schmedake

As the new Executive Vice President for the International System Safety Society, I do appreciate the opportunity to serve this Society. The role of the Executive Vice President is largely a lieutenant role to that of the Society's President. However, one key responsibility that I take seriously is the requirement to ensure that the Society abides by its bylaws, policies and procedures.

These are essentially a contract between Society officials and the Society membership. They commit a process for how we do business, and are available for all to see on our Society’s Website. This command media is intended to ensure that all decisions are made openly, ethically and in keeping with the principles of this Society.

Within our Society, there are different tiers of documents. At the top are the bylaws. They document the organization's purpose and structure. They lay out the rules of how decisions are made. The next tier down is the Operating Manual. Within the scope of the bylaws, this manual describes the day-to-day operation of the Society. It details specific responsibilities for the elected and appointed officials that serve the Society.

Other documents that govern how we operate include the Strategic Plan, and the Fundamental Canons of Ethics. Our Strategic Plan outlines the goals of the Society and concrete actions to be taken to further those goals. It is revised regularly and reflects the current thinking of the Executive Council. In contrast, the Fundamental Canons of Ethics were written earlier in the life of the Society and remain relatively unchanged over the years. They describe the guiding principles of a systems safety professional and represent the ideal.

Our command media has provisions for change and improvement. There are good reasons for periodically reviewing our documents to determine if they reflect the best way of doing business today. When inefficiencies that can be eliminated exist, then we should eliminate them. The key is to fix the process, not bypass it.

Officers and directors are expected to work within these rules, guidelines, principles and objectives. In this Society, as in our daily work lives, there are temptations by those with responsibility to streamline decisions at the expense of the process. My role is to ensure that we abide by our Bylaws and Operating Manual. I feel that if we were to do otherwise, we would not be keeping our commitment to our membership.

All of these documents are available on the Society Website at www.system-safety.org/ecdocs/.

— Robert Schmedake