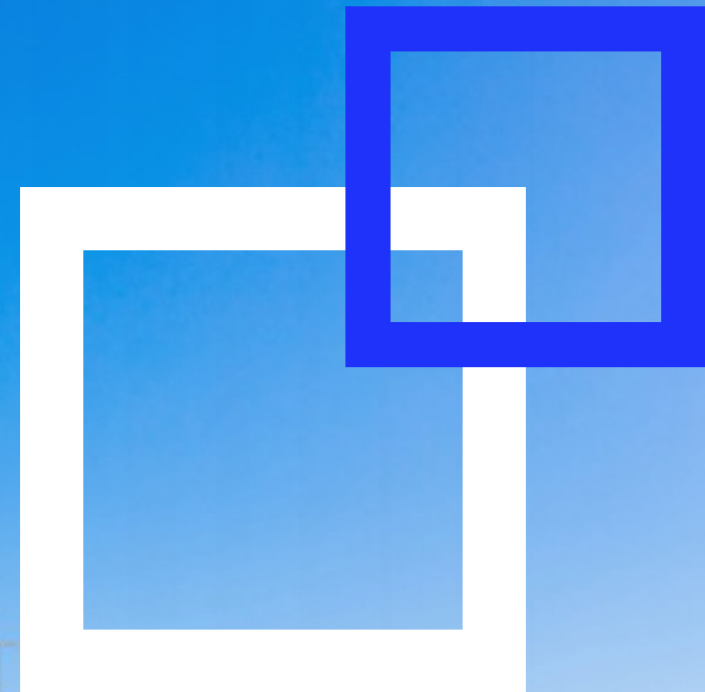2023 Trends

Ground handling operations

On a daily basis IATA is working with its member airlines, ground handling service providers (GHSPs), and other representatives from the whole air transport supply chain on what's happening in the aviation industry, common standards and industry initiatives.

The Ground Operations Group (GOG) was established by IATA as an advisory body on various matters related to safe and efficient ground operations.

The group consists of IATA member airlines and colleagues from Airport Service Association (ASA) and Airport Council International (ACI) who represents the views of GHSPs and airports. The GOG members ensure that the latest best practices and procedures related to ground operations are effective and efficient. The group also provides strategic directions on the development and implementation of ground ops standards, development and innovation of technologies and equipment used in ground operations as well as the promotion, support and implementation of various ground operations programs with the aim of reducing ground damages and injuries as well as improving operational efficiency.

The results of these initiatives are then incorporated in the IATA Airport Handling Manual (AHM) and IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM).

Top ground handling operations trends for 2023

There will be challenges as ground handling operations ramp up to meet growing demand as the aviation industry's recovery from COVID-19 progresses. Overcoming financial losses, labor shortages, ensuring safety with strict adherence to global standards as well as digitalization and modernization will be critical to achieving a scalable restart.

1 Overcoming labor shortages and knowledge gaps

Thousands of ground handling staff left the aviation industry during the pandemic. Now as aviation ramps up, the severe shortage of skilled ground staff is shedding light on the need for reform to stabilize the talent pool. Even before the peak northern summer travel season, passengers were already experiencing the effects of bottlenecks in getting security clearances for staff at the airport. Additional resources were needed to accelerate the processing times for employment security clearances which can be as much as 6 months in some markets. The shortages we are experiencing today are a symptom of the longer-term challenges to achieve a stable talent base in ground handling.

The immediate issue is the bottleneck for security clearances. But longer-term, the ground handling sector will have to:

- **Adopt a stronger talent acquisition strategy**
  Attracting fresh talent is critical. This is made more challenging by perceptions created in the pandemic with the critical retrenchment of large numbers of staff, including those in ground handling. It's likely that more awareness campaigns will be created to highlight the attractiveness and importance of ground operations in global logistics as well as career path mapping to demonstrate long-term prospects for people entering the sector.

- **Retention programs**
  Global standardization will improve performance, provide employment flexibility and broader career options. Training passports that mutually recognize skills and training across ground handlers, airlines and/or airports could improve retention rates and the adoption of new technologies and automated processes to create diverse job opportunities and career paths could attract a new generation talent. In addition, providing a better work environment, more flexibility in scheduling and better wages could all improve retention.

- **More efficient onboarding processes**
  Training and security clearance for new staff can take more than six months. More efficient and expedited onboarding will allow the sector to adapt quickly to demand changes, including those which are seasonal. This could be achieved by training standardization and a greater focus on competency-based training; moving to more online training and skills assessments which could improve speed, flexibility and efficiency of onboarding. In addition, mutual recognition by authorities of security training and employee background records will expedite onboarding and reduce redundant processes.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? View this video to learn about:
- Minimum training requirements for frontline personnel
- Gap analysis for training management
- Guidance on how to benefit from training time and cost reductions
- And much more…

2 Return of passengers will increase the risk of baggage mishandling

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments are lifting travel restrictions and traffic volumes are recovering as passengers regain confidence in air travel. Not all regions grow at the same pace, but IATA expects overall traveller numbers to reach 4.0 billion in 2024 (counting multi-sector connecting trips as one passenger), exceeding pre-COVID-19 levels. With higher traffic volumes comes increased baggage loads, more long-haul flights, and therefore more transfer baggage.

According to the [SITA 2022 Baggage IT Insights](#), the number of mishandled baggage was 4.35 per one thousand passengers in 2021. This represents a significant increase of 24.3% from the previous year. The recent events at some airports where thousands of baggage were mishandled provide a reminder on how very urgent this issue is and to keep up with this increase in mishandled baggage, it is essential for airlines and their stakeholders to adopt practical and efficient measures to gather the trust back from travelers and to reduce the costs associated with mishandled bags.

It is also important to remember that baggage activities are not entirely about technologies and mechanics. The baggage journey is a key customer satisfaction element for airlines. Failure to deliver a passenger's baggage will result in memories of a nice inflight product and good service being quickly forgotten.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? [Reach these case studies](#) to learn about:
- The benefits of a simplified interface
- Priority baggage monitoring
- Seamless hub connection centres
- And much more…

3 Move towards standardization

In an increasingly complex and competitive air transport cargo and ground handling market environment, standardization could unlock your business' full potential. Industry standards simplify common processes and reduce cost and complexity. They allow airlines to work seamlessly with each other and with other stakeholders such as airports, ground service providers, cargo agents, freight forwarders and governments amongst others.

Standards provide a better experience for everyone involved in the air transport supply chain. However, we still see opportunities for standardization in different areas of air transport operations such as ground handling procedures. For decades, ground operations companies have been using a multitude of operational procedures. individual airlines each have their own unique procedures, which adds substantial complexity for the ground service providers. This also makes it challenging for airlines to fly to new markets as it often means onboarding ground service providers to ensure that personnel is trained and follow the airline's procedures.

IATA reported that the IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM) Portal and IATA's Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) are successfully driving greater standardization of ground handling processes around the world. This is particularly important for the rapid build-up of operations as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

IGOM and ISAGO complement each other in driving much-needed harmonization across the ground handling sector. And the boost in participation in both programs as the industry ramps up its operations is good news for both safety and efficiency. The aim of both is to reduce risk, avoid ground damage and enable standardized, sustainable operations.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? <u>Reach this article</u> to learn about:
- What the benefits of standardization are
- Process standardization vs. collaboration
- Improving safety with standardized training
- And much more…

4 Digitalization and sustainability

With the expected growth in air travel passenger demand and the new aircraft that will enter the skies during this time, airports are really pressed for space, clean air and will likely become noisier. Digitalization and automation can drive process improvements that will be critical to improving both sustainability and productivity. It is the solution of challenges rising from low airport capacity, congestion, pollution, staff shortage and as an industry, the aviation sector needs to expedite it especially in ground operations.

Harnessing data to improve safety and efficiency is crucial for the ground handling industry. The overall aim is to be able to make data-driven operational decisions that will cut costs, improve performance and contribute to the industry's net zero commitment.

Aircraft are already connected to the ground, but we are starting to see them being connected to operations in smarter ways for which digitalization facilitates the exchange of data in real time. Such information sharing can complement human to human with machine-to-machine interactions and predictive analysis can enhance the capability to accommodate more traffic and improve turnaround performance while ensuring safe operations.

In addition, new generation batteries and alternative green fuels are already contributing to the net zero commitment. The innovation in technology has led to control systems becoming more precise which is enabling more autonomous operations.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? <u>View this video</u> to learn about:
- The CEDAR initiative (Connected Ecological Digital Autonomous Ramp)
- Digitalization of aircraft turn around
- Modernization of ground support equipment and processes
- Enhanced stand design
- And much more…

About IATA

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 290 airlines or 83% of total air traffic. We support many areas of aviation activity and help formulate industry policy on critical aviation issues.

For nearly 80 years, we have developed global commercial standards upon which the air transport industry is built. Our aim is to assist airlines by simplifying processes and increasing passenger convenience while reducing costs and improving efficiency. We help airlines to operate safely, securely, efficiently, and economically under clearly defined rules. Professional support is provided to all industry stakeholders with a wide range of products and expert services.

Discover related IATA products and services

IATA Ground Operations Manual

The IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM) standardizes ground handling processes and procedures to and offers the best industry practices aiming to reduce the complexity between working with multiple airlines, airports and ground service providers. The IGOM has also been known as an acceptable means of compliance and as a reference tool for ISAGO audits. The IGOM is procedure driven, focusing on "how to do". Learn more

IATA Airport Handling Manual

The AHM contains all the industry-approved policies and standards to support safe and efficient ground operations above and below the wing. The AHM is policy driven and focuses on "what to do". Learn more

IATA Training

IATA's ground operations training courses aims to create efficiency on the ground through management and operational courses. Taught by industry experts, our courses focus on best practices within the complex operational environment in modern airports, preparing you to increase on-time performance in your ground station. Learn more

IATA Consulting

IATA Consulting has comprehensive experience in the full array of business challenges facing the aviation sector. With our depth and breadth of aviation industry experience, we assist clients in maximizing the value of their operating model, realizing growth ambitions, and gaining insights that translate into sustainable competitive advantages. Learn more

IATA Training Validation

The IATA Training Validation Program aims to support ground handling companies with to develop of their training program, instructional materials and content for ground operation related training courses in accordance with Chapter 1100 of the Airport Handling Manual and industry best practices. Learn more