

SYMPOSIUM ON COMMERCIAL SPACEFLIGHT SAFETY ISSUES (D6)
Commercial Space Flight Safety and Emerging Issues (1)

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SAFETY INSPECTION PARADIGM SHIFT FROM AVIATION TO COMMERCIAL SPACE
TRANSPORTATION

Abstract

The U.S. Commercial Space Launch Act of 1984 created an organization now known as the Office of Commercial Space Transportation to oversee and coordinate the conduct of commercial launch operations, to issue and transfer commercial launch licenses authorizing such activities. The Act also provided guidance on the extent of the regulatory oversight the new organization would have, specifically only to the extent necessary, to ensure compliance with international obligations of the United States and to protect the public health and safety, safety of property, and national security interests and foreign policy interests of the United States.

But how can other nations with a nascent space industry approach public safety? Considering the developed infrastructure and regulatory framework in civil and commercial aviation it would seem a straightforward path to add space launch vehicles to this existing framework. Aviation has certification, standardization and years of testing and operations that have shaped the approach to verification of compliance. However for innovative developmental technologies such a framework would create a burden that could stifle its development.

This paper proposes to look at the Office of Commercial Space Transportation approach to safety inspections as a springboard to help other organizations build on their inspection commercial space transportation program by considering the following questions: what do you want to inspect, who can inspect? How do you empower the inspectors through a regulatory framework? How do you finance it all?