BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 90-901

1 APRIL 2000

Command Policy

OPERATIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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OPR: HQ AFSC/SEPO   Certified by: HQ USAF/SEP (Col Robert W. Scott)
Supersedes AFI 91-213, 1 September 1997.   Pages: 7

This instruction implements AFPD 90-901, Operational Risk Management. It establishes the requirement to integrate and sustain operational risk management (ORM) throughout the Air Force. It assigns responsibilities for program elements and contains program management information. HQ Air Force staffs, major commands (MAJCOMs), direct reporting units (DRUs) and field operating agencies (FOAs) are responsible for establishing and sustaining their respective programs according to the program elements described in this instruction. It applies to all Air Force personnel and functional areas, including the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard. Do not supplement this instruction without prior review by the Air Force Chief of Safety (AF/SE). **Records Disposition.** Maintain and dispose of records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication in accordance with AFMAN 37-139, Records Disposition Schedule.

Section A—ORM Process Description

1. Definition, Purpose, and Scope. Operational risk management is a decision-making process to systematically evaluate possible courses of action, identify risks and benefits, and determine the best course of action for any given situation. ORM enables commanders, functional managers, supervisors, and individuals to maximize operational capabilities while limiting all dimensions of risk by applying a simple, systematic process appropriate for all personnel and functions both on- and off-duty. Appropriate use of ORM increases both an organization's and individual's ability to accomplish their mission, whether it is flying an airplane in combat, loading a truck with supplies, planning a joint service exercise, establishing a computer network, or driving home at the end of the day. Application of the ORM process ensures more consistent results, while ORM techniques and tools add rigor to the traditional approach to mission accomplishment, thereby directly strengthening the Air Force's warfighting posture.

2. Goals:

    2.1. Enhance mission effectiveness at all levels, while preserving assets and safeguarding health and welfare.

2.2. Integrate ORM into mission processes, ensuring decisions are based upon assessments of risk integral to the activity and mission.

2.3. Create an Air Force in which every leader, airman, and employee is trained and motivated to manage risk in all their on- and off-duty activities.

2.4. Identify opportunities to increase Air Force warfighting effectiveness on the battlefield and in the operational aerospace environment, helping to ensure decisive victory in any future conflict at the least possible cost.

3. ORM Principles. Four principles govern all actions associated with the management of risk. These principles, continuously employed, are applicable before, during, and after all tasks and operations.

3.1. **Accept no unnecessary risk.** Unnecessary risk comes without a commensurate return in terms of real benefits or available opportunities. All Air Force missions and daily routines involve risk. The most logical choices for accomplishing a mission are those that meet all mission requirements while exposing personnel and resources to the lowest acceptable risk.

3.2. **Make risk decisions at the appropriate level.** Making risk decisions at the appropriate level establishes clear accountability. Those accountable for the success or failure of the mission must be included in the risk decision process.

3.3. **Accept risk when benefits outweigh the costs** . All potential benefits should be compared to all potential costs. The process of weighing risks against opportunities and benefits helps to maximize unit capability. Even high risk endeavors may be undertaken when there is a well founded basis to believe that the sum of the benefits exceeds the sum of the costs.

3.4. **Integrate ORM into operations and planning at all levels.** To effectively apply risk management, commanders must dedicate time and resources to integrate ORM principles into planning and operational processes. Risk assessments of operations are most mission supportive when they are done as a normal way of conducting a mission, not an add-on process performed by people not otherwise involved.

4. ORM Fundamentals. The essential concepts of Air Force ORM are outlined below. ORM:

4.1. Is a comprehensive system for improving individual and organizational performance in all functional areas and operations.

4.2. Should be tailored to meet the unique mission needs and operational requirements of each organization.

4.3. Provides the process and tools to develop and enhance awareness and understanding of at-risk activities and behavior of personnel both on- and off-duty.

4.4. Application may identify areas where regulatory guidance is overly restrictive or otherwise not consistent with mission requirements. In this event, the risk assessment may be used to support solicitation of appropriate level waiver, variance, or change, but will not in itself constitute authority to violate any directive, policy, standard, or other applicable regulatory guidance.

4.5. Is a continuous, systematic decision-making tool consisting of six steps that define the process. The following is a description of the six-step process.