



Company: United Aviation  
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## PIONEERS IN GROUND HANDLING SERVICES IN SPAIN – COMMITTED TO SAFETY

United Aviation was founded in 1979 in Spain by two pioneers who were passionate about excellence in safety and for growing their family business. They discovered a niche opportunity to support the business aviation ground handling segment that other companies in Spain were not addressing. Unlike commercial airlines handling services United Aviation set out to become experts in this business jet market and constantly look for ways to exceed customers' expectations and rise above their competition.

Jose Rubinho, United Aviation Services Safety Manager, shares the story of the company's success and the IS-BAH journey.

As they worked to structure the business for growth, they expanded throughout Spain with joint ventures and select investments with other companies. And as Jose explains, they needed to be creative and find ways to distinguish their business from others.

"Achieving IS-BAH accreditation was one of those distinguishing factors as it is a voluntary safety standard that is recognized worldwide. No other FBO in Spain at the time had an SMS and our largest

customer, a well-known fractional ownership company, highly suggested that we implement an SMS. We saw IS-BAH as an opportunity to satisfy our customer's request and help set us apart by displaying our commitment to safety and excellence to attract new customers."

"We had nearly 200 pages of procedures for the company, so it was a little challenging at first integrating what we were doing with the industry standard," Jose stated. "But we were committed to

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Jose Rubinho, Safety Manager

making this work for our current customers because we wanted to add value and attract new business."

In 2018, Jose was wearing the safety manager hat and business development, sales, and training hats too.

Now, they have a quality manager and a new safety manager taking on many of those tasks from Jose. "It takes an investment from the company to provide the right people to make it all come together and work toward the same goal. We work well now as a team and always look for ways to improve."

### Stage 2 with Options for Stage 3

Four of United's locations are currently Stage 2; Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and Ibiza, and they will soon have a fifth location IS-BAH registered. Jose added, "We feel good about reaching stage two, and want to continue to develop the system. It doesn't mean that we are doing everything perfectly, but we are always trying to have a proactive approach and continue to improve our reporting system. I know that reaching stage three level is not required, but we aim to establish the highest standard possible.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON IS-BAH  
 VISIT [IBAC.ORG/IS-BAH](http://IBAC.ORG/IS-BAH).**

## PIONEERS IN GROUND HANDLING SERVICES IN SPAIN

We are currently establishing the SMS system in 20 airports. We are not IS-BAH accredited at all, but we are following the same safety management system. We will possibly register IS-BAH at all these locations, an unprecedented achievement in Spain."

### Innovation In a Competitive Environment

One innovative achievement that United attained because of its IS-BAH registration was developing a special Civil Liability policy with its insurance provider. This unique safety guarantee provides additional coverage to United customers for loss of profit if their aircraft is damaged under their care. "We talked with our insurance provider, and they recognized we were reducing the number of incidents and claims with our safety management and reporting system. Because of our performance, the insurance company offered United a substantial discount on our insurance costs. From an insurance perspective, I believe we are the first here in the industry to be offered such a discount. The insurance discount coming to United Aviation Services was great but would never be noticed by our customers. We got together and brainstormed how this could be a benefit to our customers and add value to our relationship, as well as attract new business.

IS-BAH allowed us to think outside the box and find a way to share this advantage with our customers. We asked our insurance provider to explore another type of coverage in place of the discount on our policy. Now we not only provide aircraft damage insurance to

customers, which is required in Spain, but we include special coverage for consequential losses if our team damages the plane."

For example, if a nose wheel is damaged when doing a pushback, the aircraft may be out service for repair and the coverage would not only cover the repair costs but any business losses from being out of service for missed trips that must be brokered, repositioning costs, etc. for up to 1 million Euros. "As far as we know, this is the only ground-handling business with this kind of safety warranty," added Jose.

The United Aviation team has also been involved with the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) to establish a new standard of agreements that can be shared to indicate a business aviation service provider's level of insurance coverage and its commitment to safety. The idea is to provide clients with an easy way to compare what is covered and what is not by ground handlers throughout the EU when looking for a new standard of agreements.

### Safety is an Investment

Jose emphasized the need for operators to prioritize handling safety and make it the top consideration when requesting a quote and selecting a handler. "Everybody says that they are very safety focus but at the end of the day, the price is a prime factor for many decisions in our industry. Safety does require financial support, and to have this financial support,

we need the operators to trust that maybe the ground handler is charging a little bit more for a higher level of reliability and safety."

Training is imperative to ground handling safety, and with seasonal activity in Spain at different locations, United had to be creative to continue this in the most cost-efficient way. As a result, United created a web portal that provides 80% of the training remotely. The initial development of the portal was an investment, but it saved time and expenses for trainers traveling less often to the 20 United locations for training. Physical training sessions remain in person as some things cannot be taught online and remain a substantial investment.

United's robust training system and focus on safety provide reliability not only for the customers but also for the workforce.

"The investment in our people working here does not go unnoticed. Today, most young people don't want just to go to work; they want to work in an environment that supports them. Investing in training, our reporting system and in a safety culture for our employees and our customers demonstrates our commitment to a future that others want to be a part of. Our investment in IS-BAH will help us to retain our team as well as attract new talent. And when there is turnover, all these processes and procedures are in place to make a much cleaner transition."



As a non-profit, international trade association, IBAC proudly represents the interests of business aviation – for the industry, by the industry – through its global advocacy, official observer status at the ICAO, and by raising the standard for safety with IS-BAO® and IS-BAH® Programmes.