



421 Aviation Way  
Frederick, Maryland 21701

T. 301-695-2000  
F. 301-695-2375

[www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org)

May 28, 2008

Docket Operations, M-30  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Rm. W12-410  
Washington, DC 20590-0001

**RE: Docket No. FAA-2008-0188 Re-Registration and Renewal of Aircraft Registration**

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit individual membership organization of more than 415,000 pilots. Representing two thirds of all pilots in the United States, AOPA is the largest civil aviation organization in the world. Our mission is to effectively serve the interests of members as pilots or aircraft owners to establish, maintain, and articulate positions of leadership to promote the economy, safety, utility, and popularity of flight in general aviation aircraft.

On February 28, 2008, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) titled "Re-Registration and Renewal of Aircraft Registration." According to the FAA, the NPRM is based on the need to increase and maintain the accuracy of aircraft registration information in the Civil Aviation Registry. Specifically, the NPRM proposes replacing the existing one-time non-expiring aircraft registration with a new three-year expiring registration. As part of the implementation, owners of currently registered aircraft would have to re-register their aircraft with the FAA.

**AOPA Supports Improving Accuracy of Registry – But Not the FAA’s Plan for Doing So**

Although AOPA supports the FAA’s goal of improving the accuracy of the Aircraft Registry, the Association objects to the procedures proposed by the FAA. AOPA has developed an alternative that is a simpler approach to meeting the Agency’s goal using a process that is less burdensome for aircraft owners. AOPA’s members have made it clear in a recent survey that they object to increased burdens placed on aircraft owners under the FAA proposal to improve the accuracy of the Aircraft Registry that the FAA allowed to degrade over time.

Specifically, AOPA opposes the elements of the FAA’s proposed plan that requires:

- All aircraft owners to convert to three-year expiring registrations.
- The re-registering of all currently registered aircraft to an expiring registration system.
- The cancellation of any aircraft registration numbers (N-numbers) for aircraft not re-registered with the FAA within the specified timeframe.

It is also imperative that there is no increase in registration fees or unnecessary administrative burdens on aircraft owners related to the FAA’s efforts to update its registry. Aircraft owners are very concerned with the cost of operation as they face unprecedented costs for fuel and other expenses related to owning and operating aircraft.

## **Background: FAA's Current Aircraft Registration Requirements**

14 CFR Part 47 entitled "Aircraft Registration" lists the requirements for aircraft registration. Part 47 states that an aircraft may not be operated unless it is properly registered, and the registration certificate (or other authorizing documentation) is onboard the aircraft while it is being operated. Under the current requirements, the aircraft registration certificate issued by the FAA has no expiration date and is valid until it is suspended or revoked by the FAA; or until the aircraft is sold, destroyed, scrapped or the registration is voluntarily cancelled by the owner. Aircraft owners are also required to notify the FAA of any "reportable" change to their aircraft registration, (change of address, request for a duplicate registration certificate, or application for a change of N-number).

As part of the process for maintaining the database of aircraft, the FAA requires owners who have had no reportable changes to complete the FAA's Triennial Aircraft Registration Report (AC Form 8050-73) if sent to them by the FAA. According to the NPRM, the FAA sends 70,000 Triennial Aircraft Registration Reports annually resulting in 9,000 address changes and 5,000 aircraft with undeliverable addresses.

## **FAA's Proposed New Requirements and AOPA's Response and Alternative Recommendations**

The FAA proposal replaces existing aircraft registrations that do not expire with ones that would expire after three years and require renewal every three years. Aircraft owners that do not renew or re-register their aircraft in the time specified by the FAA could be denied access to the National Airspace System or lose their registration number.

AOPA is opposed to many elements of the FAA's proposed plan and has suggested an alternate plan that would improve the accuracy of the registry's data while removing many of the objectionable elements of the FAA's plan. AOPA is proposing an alternative plan that:

- Does not require expiring registrations.
- Allows aircraft owners to verify registry information online or through the existing Triennial Aircraft Registration Report every three years.
- Does not "administratively" cancel N-numbers if aircraft owners fail to re-register or renew on time.

### ***Existing Aircraft Registrations***

**FAA Proposes:** The FAA is proposing to require owners of all 343,000 aircraft currently listed in the Aircraft Registry to re-register the aircraft. To implement the new requirements, the FAA is proposing to spread the re-registration over a three-year period. Aircraft owners will be given one-three month window and will not be allowed to re-register early or late. After the owner completes the re-registration requirements, the aircraft will be issued an expiring registration that must be renewed every three years. If an aircraft registration expires, the N-number will be administratively canceled and the aircraft is not permitted access to the National Airspace System.

**AOPA Response:** *AOPA opposes the FAA's proposed requirement to re-register all aircraft currently in the FAA's Aircraft Registry and replace the current non-expiring aircraft registration with one that would expire after three years.*

Instead, AOPA recommends that an aircraft's registration not expire and that the FAA require verification for all aircraft in the FAA Aircraft Registry within 36 months. This could be accomplished by the FAA's developing a system that allows aircraft owners the ability to access the FAA's Aircraft Registry online and update or verify the accuracy of the information. Using the Internet is simple, little or no cost to the government and is convenient for the aircraft owner. A record of this activity would then be included in the aircraft's history in the FAA's Aircraft Registry.

If appropriate, the online system could include a printable report or receipt of this activity that aircraft owners could keep as part of their records. Similar systems are already in place and used by the FAA's Airman Registry, Aero Medical, and for the dissemination of airworthiness directives. The FAA must also provide a non-electronic option for the verification of FAA's Aircraft Registry information.

#### ***New Aircraft Registrations***

**FAA Proposes:** Any new aircraft registrations occurring after the rule goes into effect will be issued with a three-year expiration date, after which the aircraft owner would have to renew the aircraft registration or it would expire.

**AOPA Response:** *AOPA opposes the expiration of aircraft registration certificates.*

As an alternative, AOPA proposes that aircraft registrations issued after the final rule takes effect would follow the same registration process used today and would be issued a *non-expiring aircraft* registration. Following the initial registration, aircraft owners would verify the registration information every three years as outlined in the previous section.

#### ***After "Re-registration" Requirements Are Fully Implemented***

**FAA Proposes:** After the initial re-registration of all existing aircraft in the FAA's Aircraft Registry, the FAA is proposing that one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the aircraft registration expiration date, the Agency will notify the aircraft owner that they must renew their registration. If an aircraft's registration is not renewed prior to expiration, the N-number will be administratively canceled and the aircraft is not permitted access to the National Airspace System.

**AOPA Response:** *AOPA opposes the expiration of aircraft registration certificates and the subsequent administrative cancelling of N-numbers.*

AOPA proposes that instead of cancelling N-numbers for aircraft whose owner has not verified using the process proposed by AOPA, these be considered "inactive" and listed in a database. A

list of these aircraft N-numbers should be made public so that aircraft owners and others can check the status of aircraft registrations. These aircraft would still be subject to the same limitations as currently proposed by the FAA with respect to access to the National Airspace System.

There are numerous valid reasons why aircraft do not fly for long periods of time and no activity is reported to the registry. Two common reasons are long-term maintenance and restoration. Owners who do not register their aircraft are not in violation of any FAA regulations and this alternative should be provided to them.

***Fees to Register/Re-register Aircraft***

**FAA Proposes:** The FAA's proposal applies the current \$5 fee to its initial registration, re-registration and subsequent renewals; but the agency makes it clear that fee increases are being considered. The FAA has asked Congress for the authority to access a \$130 charge for aircraft registration.

**AOPA Response:** *AOPA is opposed to the proposed fee increase.*

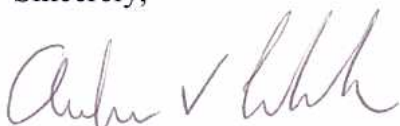
Under AOPA's alternative plan there is no need for fee increases or additional fees. AOPA's proposal provides the FAA and users of the registry a means of addressing both new and existing registry information without additional costs. This alternative plan also utilizes the existing registry infrastructure including the Triennial Aircraft Registry Report. The only significant change from the FAA proposed plan and AOPA's proposed plan is the enhancement of the online capabilities already contemplated by the FAA.

**Conclusion**

AOPA opposes the FAA's proposed plan to convert to expiring aircraft registrations, requiring the re-registration of all currently registered aircraft and the administrative canceling of all N-numbers issued to aircraft that do not re-register with the FAA.

AOPA does, however, support enhancing the accuracy of the FAA's Aircraft Registry. Aircraft owners must not be expected to bear the burden of correcting a system that has deteriorated over time. AOPA has provided its alternative plan that addresses the stated needs of the FAA while taking into consideration the concerns of aircraft owners. AOPA's alternative plan provide a financially responsible way to update the registry's information in a manner that minimally impacts individual aircraft owners.

Sincerely,



Andrew V. Cebula  
Executive Vice President  
Government Affairs