



421 Aviation Way
Frederick, Maryland 21701

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

www.aopa.org

March 2, 2011

Mel Cintron
Division Mgr, General Aviation and Commercial Division AFS-800
Federal Aviation Administration
Orville Wright Building (FOB10A)
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Mr. Cintron,

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is a not-for-profit individual membership organization representing more than 400,000 members. AOPA's mission is to effectively serve the interests and needs of its members as aircraft owners and pilots and establish, maintain, and articulate positions of leadership to promote the economy, safety, utility, and popularity of flight in general aviation aircraft. Representing two thirds of all pilots in the United States, AOPA is the largest civil aviation organization in the world.

In anticipation of the issuance of a final rule on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) titled: Pilot in Command Proficiency Check and Other Changes to the Pilot and Pilot School Certification Rules under Docket No. FAA-2008-0938, AOPA would like to reiterate our strong support of the proposal to eliminate the requirement of the 10 hours of aeronautical experience in a complex airplane in § 61.129(a)(3)(ii) and restate our concerns regarding the proposal to add 10 hours of “advanced instrument training”.

In the NPRM published in the Federal Register August 9, 2009, the FAA proposed several changes to pilot, flight instructor, and pilot school certification rules. Among the most positive changes proposed is the revision to the Commercial Pilot Certification - Airplane Single Engine (Land and Sea) rating to eliminate the requirement of the 10 hours of aeronautical experience in a complex airplane in § 61.129(a)(3)(ii). AOPA strongly supports this proposal on the basis that it reduces the economic burden on flight schools and students and increases safety. As was stated in the NPRM fewer single-engine airplanes are being produced with retractable landing gear. Without the elimination of this requirement in § 61.129, flight schools are forced to maintain aging aircraft solely for the purpose of meeting this requisite.

AOPA's Pilot Information Center regularly receives calls and emails from members, including flight schools and student pilots, regarding the proposal to eliminate the complex requirement from the commercial certificate. Flight schools unanimously voice their strong support of this change and view it as a way to relieve the financial burden of having to maintain older aircraft solely to meet the requirements of the commercial certificate. Most flight schools are small businesses that have felt first-hand the pressures of trying to keep their businesses afloat

during these difficult economic times. As the time for final rule on this NPRM approaches, we have experienced an increased volume in member contacts asking for updates on what the outcome of this proposal will be. Many flight schools are waiting for the final outcome of this proposal to make critical decisions regarding sale or purchases of aircraft. Students are contacting us to try to estimate what the cost of a commercial certificate will be as they contemplate ways to finance their education or make a determination as to whether they can afford to pursue the commercial certificate at all. Many private pilots that do not need a commercial certificate pursue the higher training of a commercial certificate to increase their skills and abilities, thereby increasing safety. One of the determining factors of whether these private pilots pursue this higher certificate level is the cost of the training. If the FAA eliminates the 10 hours of complex for the commercial certificate, it would reduce the cost to obtain the certificate and increase safety by attracting more pilots to pursue a higher level of training.

With regard to the proposal to add 10 hours of “advanced instrument training” which includes “both precision and non-precision approaches, holding at navigational radio stations, intersections, waypoints, and cross-country flying that involve performing takeoff, area departure, enroute, area arrival, approach, and missed approach phases of flight” is not only unnecessary, it doesn’t make sense. The FAA allows for the issuance of a commercial certificate with the limitation of VFR only. § 61.133(b) states: “A person who applies for a commercial pilot certificate with an airplane category or powered-lift category rating and does not hold an instrument rating in the same category and class will be issued a commercial pilot certificate that contains the limitation, “The carriage of passengers for hire in (airplanes) (powered-lifts) on cross-country flights in excess of 50 nautical miles or at night is prohibited.”” Pilots requiring a commercial certificate for the purpose of employment at jobs that do not require instrument flight, carriage of passengers or cross-country flights often obtain the commercial certificate with such a limitation. Examples of jobs that fit this description include pilots flying pipeline, traffic, agricultural spraying, or banner towing. AOPA suggests that the FAA convene a meeting of flight training providers and industry representatives to determine what the 10 hours of training should entail.

AOPA also asks the FAA to modify the practical test standards for both the commercial pilot certificate and the flight instructor certificate to no longer require a complex aircraft. These changes are critical to the flight training industry in order to take full advantage of these proposed changes.

As AOPA and the general aviation community awaits the issuance of a final rule on Pilot in Command Proficiency Check and Other Changes to the Pilot and Pilot School Certification, we hope that the FAA will give strong consideration to maintaining the proposal to eliminate the complex aircraft provision and convene an industry group to determine what the 10 hours of training should be replaced with.

Sincerely,



Kristine Hartzell
Manager, Regulatory Affairs
AOPA