

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Part 121**

[Docket No. 27210; Amendment No. 121-248]

RIN 2120-AD88

**Pilot Operating and Experience Requirements**

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Aviation Administration amends its pilot qualification requirements for air carrier and commercial operator pilots by upgrading existing operating experience requirements, establishing a new kind of operating experience requirement, and adding requirements that would reduce the potential for an inexperienced pilot in command to be scheduled to fly with an inexperienced second in command pilot. The FAA has determined that recent practices and trends necessitate revising current pilot qualification regulations in the interest of safety to upgrade minimum crew experience and to require pilots to use newly developed knowledge and skills in actual line operations within a short time after training.

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 25, 1995.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Larry Youngblut, Project Development Branch (AFS-240), Air Transportation Division, Flight Standards Service, Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20591; Telephone (202) 267-8096.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background**

The FAA is amending part 121 pilot qualification requirements. The FAA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), Notice No. 93-1, on the subject (58 FR 15730, March 23, 1993). Most of these amendments are based on a joint government/industry task force committee's recommendation. Three proposals, on second in command (SIC) operating experience, FAA inspector observation of a pilot in command (PIC), and "satisfactory" completion of operating experience, are not committee recommendations but are parallel to the basic committee's recommendation. The final amendments are as follows:

1. The present requirement in § 121.434(a), which prohibits a certificate holder from using any person

"as a required crewmember on an airplane unless he has completed, on that type airplane and in that crewmember position, the operating experience requirements required," is revised by inserting the word "satisfactorily" before the word "completed."

2. Operating experience requirements in § 121.434 are amended to require that a PIC completing initial or upgrade training be observed during at least one flight leg by an FAA inspector in all cases, not just when the certificate holder's training program includes simulator training.

3. Operating experience requirements in § 121.434 are amended to require that an SIC must perform SIC duties under the supervision of an appropriately qualified check pilot and to eliminate the current option allowing an SIC to observe the performance of the duties on the flight deck.

4. The hours of operating experience required in § 121.434 are increased for PICs transitioning in Group II airplanes, and reductions in hours are no longer allowed for PIC initial training in Group II airplanes or for initial or transition training for SICs in Group II airplanes.

5. Operating experience requirements for both PICs and SICs in § 121.434 are amended to include requiring four operating cycles (at least two of which must be flown by the pilot). "Operating cycle" is defined in the rule as a complete flight segment consisting of a takeoff, climb, enroute portion, descent, and a landing.

6. Operating experience requirements in § 121.434 are amended to require that each PIC and SIC acquire 100 hours of line operating experience for consolidation of knowledge and skills within 120 days after completion of an airman certification practical test or completion of a proficiency check in the new airplane. "Consolidation" is defined as the process by which a person through practice and practical experience increases proficiency in newly acquired knowledge and skills. "Line operating flight time" is defined as flight time performed in operations under part 121.

7. A new section on operating limitations, § 121.438, requires a PIC, when flying with an SIC who has fewer than 100 flight hours in the type airplane being flown, to make all takeoffs and landings during certain situations. This new section also requires that either a PIC or SIC have at least 75 hours of line operating flight time for that type airplane in order to be assigned to the same flight crew. (This is commonly called "crew pairing.")

**History**

The FAA determined that these amendments were necessary because of airplane accidents and incidents that had occurred at least in part because of inexperienced flight crews. An accident that occurred in Denver in 1987 involved a Continental Airlines McDonnell Douglas DC-9-14 which crashed on takeoff. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found that the PIC, though an experienced pilot, had very little total flying time in the DC-9 and was not experienced in supervising first officers. The SIC, who was flying the aircraft when it crashed, had little experience in the DC-9 and had not flown for the previous 24 days. A second accident that occurred in New York in 1989 involved a USAir B-737. The NTSB found that the PIC, though experienced as an SIC, had only 138 hours as a PIC in air transport aircraft; the SIC, who had been recently hired and had just qualified for B-737 service, was conducting his first non-supervised line takeoff in a B-737, and also his first takeoff after a 39-day non-flying period.

In response to the problem of inexperienced crews, the FAA issued Air Carrier Operations Bulletin (ACOB) 8-88-1 (January 21, 1988) and guidance to FAA field staff (July 19, 1988). The guidance to field staff requested that principal operations inspectors (POIs) review their certificate holders' policies on crew pairing and scheduling and send copies of these policies to FAA headquarters.

The NTSB recommended (November 3, 1988), based on its investigation of the Denver accident, that the FAA issue requirements that establish minimum experience levels for each PIC and each SIC that would, in effect, "prohibit the pairing on the same flight of pilots who have less than the minimum experience in their respective positions."

The FAA reviewed accident data, NTSB recommendations on crew experience, as well as past and present practices and trends in the aviation environment that are affecting crew experience levels. For example, the practice of bidding for flight crew schedules, which is used by air carriers, results in the most experienced pilots obtaining the most desirable schedules and the least experienced pilots obtaining the least desirable schedules. Often the least experienced pilots are assigned to a reserve pool and may have to wait days or weeks before they receive a flight assignment. This system often prevents newly qualified pilots from using and perfecting their new flight skills immediately after qualifying