Aviation Legislation

The Ninety-Nines, Inc.
South Central Section

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Concerns with: Charity Flights; Sport Pilot; Photo Certificates; User Fees; Age 60 rule

The National Air Tour Safety Standards Final Rule went into effect on March 15, 2007. The most pertinent factor for us is that the minimum number of hours for private pilots to conduct charity fundraising flights rose from 200 to 500 hours. This will, of course lower the number of pilots available for such flights. There are also new requirements for letters of authorization from the FAA for commercial sightseeing flights even when they stay within a 25-mile radius of the airport beginning September 11, 2007. Fortunately, because here is no compensation to the pilots (only occasional fuel contributions for the flights,) and no cost to the young passengers, the EAA's Young Eagles Program is not affected by these changes.

By now, I'm sure many of you are tired of hearing about the "new" Sport Pilot Certificate"; however, I am continually amazed at the many active pilots who appear to have no knowledge of the new certificate. There is a new Student Pilot Certificate (not combined with medical) which is now required for exercising the privileges of a student Sport Pilot. See a good explanation of this in the current *99 NEWS* (March/April.) This new certificate continues to be of interest because training can be completed in as little as 20 hours for craft that qualify as Light Sport Aircraft. Those which have a maximum of 2 seats; max gross weight of 1,320 lbs. and fixed gear only. Basic qualifications for flying on the Sport Pilot Certificate are: Medical or U.S. driver's license and self-certification. Flight restrictions are: No night flight; no flight in Class B, C or D airspace; no less than 3 mi visibility. No more than 1 passenger; no Charity flights; no flight outside U.S. airspace.

FAA still has not finalized any action regarding the proposed new photo pilot certificates. They will probably contain other identifying information such as fingerprints, etc. For those of us who want to change from paper to the new plastic certificates, we need to be aware that our original date of issuance may be lost because the new certificates have new dates. FAA has said that if anyone needs to know their date, they can just ask. Does anyone ever forget the date they first were issued a certificate? I guess this might become important for researchers looking at certificates.

The dreaded user fees are giant steps closer than ever before. On February 14, the Administration released its proposal for changing the funding process for the FAA. In summary, here's what the administration proposes to do:

- Raise General Aviation gasoline taxes 366 percent to 70.1 cents per gallon. (Jet fuel from 21.9 to 70.1)
- Allow the FAA to impose user fee charges on GA aircraft flying in Class B airspace.
- Allow the FAA to charge landing fees at some 215 airports.
- Charge the airlines user fees, instead of taxes, and reduce the amount the airlines pay to the government.
- Create an airline-dominated board to help set user fee rates and run the air traffic control system.
- Allow the FAA to set fees and spending with no recourse to Congress or the Courts.

FAA Administrator Blakey, as recently as March 27, has called the criticism of the funding proposals "Mighty frustrating" and has called the criticism "animated and aggressive." Many in Congress are speaking out about this issue and they need our support. While we as a group cannot speak out (or write) about political issues, we CAN have our say as individuals. Write to your Senators and Congressmen and give them your position on these aviation issues.

In January, Marion Blakey's speech at the National Press Club announced that FAA will propose a change from the current age 60 retirement age for airline pilots to 65. As with international standards, one crewmember under 60 would be required I the cockpit. Unless Sen. James Inhofe (R-OKLA) and friends can get the "Freedom to Fly Act of 2007" passed to get this implemented earlier, it will probably be at least 18 months before FAA's rule change can be accomplished.

I often have at least a page or two of information on anything that gets even a line or two in this Report, so do feel free to contact me if you'd like more information. I don't always have the information in a form that I can email it, but I can fax anything I have. Find me at: charlilamb@sbcglobal.net.

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