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InFO

Information for Operators

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An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

Subject: First-Class Medical Certificates for Second-in-Command (SIC) Pilots Operating Globally

Purpose: To review SIC medical requirements for operations requiring three or more pilots for air carriers operating under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121.

Background: On occasion, U.S. commercial operator flightcrews have been detained during ramp checks conducted by a foreign civil aviation authority for not meeting certain international certification standards. In 2007, for example, French civil aviation authorities conducting a ramp check on a U.S. commercial flight scheduled to operate from Paris, France to a U.S. destination, found that the U.S. SIC pilot held a second-class medical certificate. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and French standards specify that an SIC must hold a first-class medical certificate in this case. The passenger flight was permitted to depart after another SIC with a first-class medical certificate was located. For comparison:

U.S. Regulations. In domestic operations with two pilot crews, 14 CFR part 61, § 61.23(a) (2) requires the SIC to hold a second-class medical certificate while exercising commercial pilot privileges. However, in flag and supplemental operations, 14 CFR part 121, § 121.437 requires a SIC to hold an airline transport pilot certificate when assigned to crews of three or more pilots. In this case, § 61.23(a) (1) requires the SIC to hold a first-class medical certificate.

Foreign Regulations. U.S. pilots flying in foreign airspace are required to meet the licensing requirements of the respective country. Many countries specifically require compliance with ICAO licensing standards which specify that a SIC must hold a first-class medical certificate for international air transportation. If a U.S. SIC fails to meet licensing requirements, aviation authorities of the foreign country could take action against both the individual and the operator.

Therefore, a U.S. SIC operating internationally may be required to have a first-class medical certificate, despite U.S. regulations. In addition, a U.S. SIC over age 40 must renew the first-class medical certificate every 6 months, in keeping with U.S. standards, even though international standard provides for annual renewal at the first-class level. U.S. SICs over age 40 should not interpret lapsing to annual duration, allowed when a first-class medical certificate is used for commercial pilot operations domestically, as meeting international annual duration standard.

Recommended Action: Directors of operations, chief pilots, and pilots should be aware that it is their responsibility to comply with all applicable pilot licensing requirements of both the United States and the foreign countries in which they operate.

Contact: Questions regarding the content of this InFO should be directed to Judi Citrenbaum, Office of Aerospace Medicine, (AAM-4) on 202-267-9689.