

# Completing the Certification Process

## **Introduction to the Certification Process**

Your submission of the Formal Application Letter and the required items on the Pre-Application Checklist (PAC) begins the actual certification process. The Certification Process Document (CPD), located in FAA Order 8900.1 [Volume 2, Chapter 3 Section 1 - 5: \(Section 1, Section 2, Section 3, Section 4, Section 5\)](#), delineates your role and the role of the Certification Project Team (CPT) during the entire certification process. Use the CPD as a reference while you complete requirements for each of the certification process phases.

## **Phase 2: Application**

The Application phase includes the three key steps listed below:

- [An initial review of your application package](#) (PDF)
- [A formal application meeting](#) (PDF)
- [Completion of all Gate 1 requirements](#) (PDF)

## **Phase 3: Design Assessment**

Design assessment is the function that ensures that your operating systems are designed to comply with regulations and safety standards, including the requirement to provide service at the highest level of safety in the public interest. (To download these Data Collection Tools, selected the link provided on the left-hand side of this site)

Design assessment is the most important function of SAS because safety is the outcome of a properly designed system. Poor system design compromises safety risk management.

The FAA is not looking for the absence of hazards and risks; that is not practical in a high consequence operation such as aviation. What we are looking for is this: Do you have policies and procedures in place that allow your organization to manage hazard related risk in your system and operating environment?

The Certification Project Team will continue the process that was used during the Initial Review. Team members compare your answers to ED DCT questions with your system documentation. For each applicable Element, the inspector will:

- Read your system documentation for the process.
- Read the SRRs listed on the DCT to review the regulatory requirements for the process.
- Read the FAA's policy and guidance for the process to review the intent of the regulation and inspector work instructions.
- Verify that you answered the questions correctly (Yes, No or NA).
- Verify that your references to the location where the information was found for a question are correct.

For each applicable Element, the certification project manager must decide if your process design meets the requirements for approval and acceptance. Your process design must:

- Comply with the literal requirements of aviation regulations.
- Comply with the intent of the regulations by being capable of identifying operational hazards and managing their associated risks to an acceptable level.
- Allow your personnel to perform their duties and responsibilities with a high degree of safety.

The certification project manager verifies that all of your Elements fall into one of the three categories associated with Design Accepted/Approved status before you can proceed to Phase 4, Performance Assessment. Refer to Table 10-6-1A in FAA Order [8900.1, Volume 10, Chapter 6, Section 1](#) for a complete description of Design Accepted/Approved categories.

Before moving on to Phase 3 of the certification process you must meet all [Gate 2 \(PDF\)](#) requirements.

## Phase 4: Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is the SAS function that helps ensure operational safety. During your demonstration events, inspectors use the [Element Performance Assessments \(EPA\) data collection tool](#) to collect information that will be used by the Certification Project Manager (CPM) to affirm that your process design is being followed and that it produces the intended results.

During the Performance Assessment phase, you must:

1. Confirm your operational readiness for this phase by conducting an internal safety assessment of your operating systems, using your company's audit procedures and documentation. After you ensure that all concerns found during the internal safety assessment are successfully addressed, you submit the results of the audit to the CPM.
2. Complete an aircraft conformity evaluation as described in FAA Order 8900.1 [Volume 10 Chapter 9 Section 1](#). The purpose of an aircraft conformity inspection is to verify that your aircraft conforms to its type design and is in a condition for safe operation. Your role is to:
  - o Notify the CPM of aircraft availability at least 10 working days prior to the proposed aircraft evaluation and forward the completed aircraft configuration control job aid (or equivalent) and aircraft information form to the CPM for the aircraft conformity evaluation.
  - o Submit a letter of corrections to the CPM if there are discrepancies found during the conformity evaluation. The FAA must confirm that you have corrected discrepancies before proving tests are conducted.
  - o Update the schedule of events, if required.

Refer to CPD paragraph 2-323 D in FAA Order 8900.1 [Volume 2 Chapter 3 Section 4](#) and the Request List, Figure 10-9-1A, in Order 8900.1 [Volume 10, Chapter 9, Section 1](#).

3. Prepare for the demonstration of your proposed operation. Your role is to:
  - o Submit plans for a demonstration emergency evacuation, ditching, and proving test.
  - o Submit a request for a letter of authorization (LOA), in accordance with part 119.33(c), for demonstrating appropriate operations under part 121. Make this request at least 10 business days before any aircraft flight demonstration. (See FAA Order 8900.1 [Volume 3 Chapter 29, Section 4](#).)
  - o Submit draft Operations Specifications.
4. Complete tabletop exercises. Refer to paragraph 2-323 F in FAA Order 8900.1 [Volume 3, Chapter 29, Section 5](#). The purpose of this step is for the FAA to determine if your system processes and personnel perform at a level that justifies conducting proving tests. Your role is to:
  - o Conduct the tabletop exercise with the certification project team and discuss the results of each scenario.
  - o Make corrections to your system design and/or correct personnel performance issues before beginning proving tests.
5. Conduct evacuation/ditching demonstrations, as required. Refer to CPD paragraph 2-323 G in FAA [Order 8900.1 Volume 2 Chapter 3 Section 4](#).
6. Conduct proving tests. Proving tests begin only after all [Gate III requirements \(PDF\)](#) are met. Refer to Figure 2-3-2D in FAA Order 8900.1 [Volume 2, Chapter 3, Section 2](#).

FAA team members will report their observations during these activities on the Element Performance Assessment (EPA) data collection tool. The CPM will analyze that data and make an assessment about the performance of an air carrier system. In the past we focused on finding what was wrong with the way the system was performing; the focus now is on what is right and what is working well. We will continue to identify deficiencies; but we are assuming that the system process, if it is well-designed, should be performing the way it was intended and producing the desired result.

There are categories of “performance affirmed.” See Table 10-6-1A of Order 8900.1 [Volume 10 Chapter 6 Section 1](#). The CPM must be able to affirm the performance of each applicable Element in one of these categories before you can move to Phase 5 – Administrative Functions.

Phase 4 ends after the successful completion of the proving tests.

## **Phase 5: Administrative Functions**

### **General**

The certificate and approved operations specifications are issued to you after you have corrected all significant unsatisfactory items. This action completes the certification process. You shall not be certificated under any circumstance until the certification project manager (CPM) has determined that you are fully capable of fulfilling the responsibilities as charged by Title 49 of the United States Code (49 U.S.C.) and that you will comply with Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) in an appropriate manner.

FAA Form 8430-18, Air Carrier Certificate, shall be used for an air carrier certificate. FAA Form 8430-21, Operating Certificate, shall be used for an operating certificate.

### **Issuance of Operations Specifications and Certificate**

When it is determined that you have met all regulatory requirements, the appropriate certificate and operations specifications will be presented to you. The operations specifications are prepared in accordance with the procedures in FAA Order [8900.1, Volume 3, Chapter 18](#).

### **Department of Transportation (DOT) Economic Authority**

Applicants for an air carrier certificate will not for any reason be issued operations specifications or a certificate until they have presented a copy of the DOT economic authority (a certificate, commuter air carrier authorization, or air taxi registration [Form 4507]) to the CPM.

An applicant for an operating certificate engaged in intrastate common carriage is not required to have DOT economic authority or submit any financial statement as a condition of certification.

Before issuance, the operations specifications will be signed by the applicant and the appropriate principal inspectors. The original certificate and operations specifications will then be given to the new certificate holder.

### **Certification Report**

When the new operator is certificated, the CPM is responsible for assembling a certification report. This report must be signed by the CPM and include the name and title of each certification team member who assisted in the certification project. The report is maintained in the permanent file relating to the new operator during the business life of the operator. The report shall consist of the following sections:

- Pre-application Statement of Intent (PASI)
- Schedule of Events

- The Formal Application Letter
- Final Compliance Statement
- Proving/Validation Test Evaluation Report
- Emergency evacuation demonstration report (FAA Form 8430-1)
- Ditching report
- A copy of the operations specifications issued
- A copy of the issued certificate

A summary of major difficulties experienced during the certification process and/or any recommendations that may enhance the process must be noted by phase and specialty.

### **Certification Report Retention**

The FAA district office shall retain the original of the certification report in the operator file as long as the certificate holder remains active.

When you have successfully completed the first four phases, the Regional Flight Standards Division Manager will issue an air carrier certificate for you and send it to the Certificate Holding District Office Manager (CHDO).

The CHDO Manager will issue your operations specifications and present you with your air carrier certificate.

### **Certification Process Feedback Form (PDF)**