

# NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N 8900.463

National Policy

Effective Date:  
4/24/18

Cancellation Date:  
4/24/19

**SUBJ:** Use of a Complex Airplane During a Commercial Pilot or Flight Instructor Practical Test

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- 1. Purpose of this Notice.** This notice outlines a change in policy regarding testing applicants for a commercial pilot or flight instructor certificate, regardless whether the training was received under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 61 or 141. Specifically, it outlines the policy which no longer requires applicants for a commercial pilot certificate with an airplane single-engine rating to provide a complex or turbine-powered airplane for the associated practical test and no longer requires applicants for a flight instructor certificate with an airplane single-engine rating to provide a complex airplane for the practical test.
- 2. Audience.** The primary audience for this order is Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) aviation safety inspectors (ASI), Training Center Program Managers (TCPM), and Designated Pilot Examiners (DPE). The secondary audience includes FSDO managers and supervisors, other operational FSDO employees, managers and employees of the Regulatory Support Division, the Civil Aviation Registry Division, managers and employees of the FAA Academy Commercial Transportation Operations Branch, and managers and employees of the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Training Standardization Team.
- 3. Where You Can Find This Notice.** You can find this notice on the MyFAA employee website at [https://employees.faa.gov/tools\\_resources/orders\\_notices](https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices). Inspectors can access this notice through the Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS) at <http://fsims.avs.faa.gov>. Operators can find this notice on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) website at <http://fsims.faa.gov>. This notice is available to the public at [http://www.faa.gov/regulations\\_policies/orders\\_notices](http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/orders_notices).
- 4. Background.** Many pilots seeking a commercial pilot or flight instructor certificate in the airplane category take the initial practical test in a single-engine airplane. Training providers have noted that there are far fewer single-engine complex airplanes available to meet the airplane requirements outlined in the Airman Certification Standards (ACS) or Practical Test Standards (PTS), as applicable, and the single-engine complex airplanes that are available are older airplanes that are expensive to maintain. The FAA recognizes that accomplishing the required testing in either a single-engine complex airplane or turbine-powered airplane has become cost-prohibitive for flight schools.

**a.** The ACS for an initial commercial pilot certificate with an airplane category and single-engine class rating requires the applicant to provide a complex or turbine-powered airplane for the practical test. Similarly, the FAA PTS for the issuance of a flight instructor certificate with an airplane category and single-engine class rating requires the applicant to provide a complex airplane for the practical test.

**b.** As stated above, there are far fewer single-engine complex airplanes available to meet the ACS/PTS requirement, and the single-engine complex airplanes that are available are older airplanes that are expensive to maintain. Additionally, the FAA finds that removing the commercial pilot ACS requirement to furnish a complex or turbine-powered airplane and removing the flight instructor PTS requirement to furnish a complex airplane will achieve the same objectives. The FAA has determined that removing these ACS/PTS requirements will significantly reduce costs for persons pursuing a commercial pilot or flight instructor certificate by allowing applicants to utilize less-expensive airplanes on the practical test that are not complex or turbine-powered.

**c.** Under part 61, § 61.31(e), prior to operating as pilot in command (PIC) of a complex airplane, a pilot will still be required to receive flight training and an endorsement from an authorized instructor certifying his or her proficiency in a complex airplane. Furthermore, the FAA finds that no longer requiring an applicant to provide a complex airplane for the initial commercial pilot with an airplane single-engine rating practical test or a flight instructor with an airplane single-engine rating practical test will not result in a decreased level of safety.

**d.** The FAA has also received multiple petitions for exemption that seek relief from § 61.45(b) and the requirement to use a single-engine complex airplane during the commercial pilot and flight instructor practical tests for the issuance of airplane category and single-engine class ratings. The petitions are additional examples of ongoing industry concern over the lack of flexibility provided by the current requirement to furnish a complex single-engine airplane for use during testing for these certificates and ratings.

**5. Guidance.** The FAA has determined that any airplane may be used to accomplish the tasks prescribed in the initial commercial pilot with an airplane single-engine rating practical test or a flight instructor with an airplane single-engine rating practical test, provided that airplane is capable of accomplishing all areas of operation required for the practical test and is the appropriate category and class for the rating sought. Therefore, the airplane used for the practical test must still meet the requirements specified in § 61.45.

**a.** The applicable ACS and PTS will be amended to reflect this change in policy as soon as possible. Until that time, this notice should be used.

**b.** The Commercial Pilot ACS with the updated policy will be FAA-S-ACS-7 with changes 1, 2, and 3. This ACS must be utilized until a revised one is published.

**c.** The Flight Instructor PTS with the updated policy will be FAA-S-8081-6D with changes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. This PTS must be utilized until a revised one is published.

**d.** There is no change to the complex airplane training and endorsement requirements of § 61.31(e) or to the commercial pilot aeronautical experience requirements of § 61.129(a)(3)(ii) or part 141 appendix D.

**6. Action.** FSDOs should immediately provide a copy of this notice to all assigned DPEs and local flight training providers. It is recommended that local FAA Safety Team (FAASTeam) Program Managers (FPM) be utilized to help educate the local aviation community on this new policy.

**7. Disposition.** We will incorporate the information in this notice into the applicable ACS and PTS before this notice expires. Direct questions concerning the information in this notice to the Airmen Training and Certification Branch at 202-267-1100.



John S. Duncan  
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