

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N 8900.761

National Policy

Effective Date:
1/9/26

Cancellation Date:
1/9/27

SUBJ: Role of the Flight Standards District Office in Conducting Practical Tests for a Pilot School Seeking Examining Authority

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice contains guidance that is pertinent to Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) § 141.63 examining authority qualification requirements.

2. Audience. The primary audience for this notice is Flight Standards (FS) aviation safety inspectors (ASI) and Designated Pilot Examiners (DPE) who conduct practical tests for pilot schools seeking examining authority. The secondary audience includes 14 CFR part 141 pilot schools.

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 and the Dynamic Regulatory System (DRS) at <https://drs.faa.gov>. Operators and the public can find this notice on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) website at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/orders_notices and DRS.

4. Reissue. This notice reissues expired Notice N 8900.723, Role of the Flight Standards District Office in Conducting Practical Tests for a Pilot School Seeking Examining Authority, dated November 22, 2024.

5. Background.

a. Currently, the guidance in FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 5, Chapter 12, Section 4, Examining Authority, Paragraph 5-1850, Initiation, advises the Flight Standards District Offices (FSDO) that, after receiving an application for examining authority from a 14 CFR part 141 pilot school, the FSDO should conduct the FAA practical test for at least 50 percent of the graduates of the course for which the school applied for examining authority. The guidance states that the remaining practical tests may be conducted by a DPE who is not an employee of the school. The guidance also advises FSDOs that they should accomplish the practical tests in a timely and practical manner to expedite the issuance of examining authority. The FSDOs are unable to conduct practical tests at the level specified in the guidance due to resource constraints. As a result, FSDOs are not considering applications for examining authority, which is precluding 14 CFR part 141 pilot schools from obtaining examining authority.

b. Title 14 CFR § 141.63(a)(5) requires the practical tests to be given by either an ASI or a DPE who is not an employee of the school. However, the regulation does not prescribe the percentage of practical tests that must be administered by an ASI. The FAA has therefore determined that the guidance in paragraph 5-1850 is confusing and not supported by the FAA's regulations. Accordingly, the FAA is removing the provision in paragraph 5-1850 that advises FSDOs to conduct practical tests for at least 50 percent of the graduates of the course for which the school applied for examining authority. By removing this provision, the FAA will enable FSDOs to process applications for examining authority.

6. Guidance. Order 8900.1, Volume 5, Chapter 12, Section 4, paragraph 5-1850 will be modified to read as follows:

“5-1850 INITIATION.

A. Application. Application for examining authority is made in duplicate on Form FAA 8420-8, Application for Pilot School Certification, and is sent to the responsible Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). The ASI accepts or denies an application on the basis of eligibility, completeness, or accuracy.

NOTE: When the applicant requests examining authority for flight testing privileges only, the applicant must place the words “Flight Only” on the application immediately after the title of the course(s).

B. Role of the FSDO.

1) When a pilot school notifies the FAA that it intends to apply for examining authority for one or more of its approved courses, the responsible FSDO should closely review and monitor the school's administration of those courses. If the Principal Operations Inspector (POI) determines there is a need to administer practical tests or observe practical tests conducted by DPEs, they will notify the pilot school to coordinate the scheduling of those tests.

2) Considerations for POIs in making the determination for additional surveillance could include, but not limited to, reviewing the school's profile in SAS, overall history, or the school's administration of courses.

3) After receipt of the application, the FSDO has the option to observe or conduct end of course practical tests prior to the issuance of examining authority.”

7. Action. Effective immediately, FSDOs are not required to conduct FAA practical tests for any specified percentage of the graduates of the course(s) for which the pilot school applied for examining authority. However, there may be reasons why FSDOs may need to conduct FAA practical tests, and the removal of this requirement does not preclude the ability or authority for FSDOs to conduct FAA practical tests for the graduates of the course(s) for which the pilot school applied for examining authority.

8. Disposition. We will incorporate the information in this notice into Order 8900.1 before this notice expires. Direct questions or comments concerning the information in this notice to the General Aviation and Commercial Division (AFS-800), Training and Certification Group (AFS-810) at 9-AFS-800-Correspondence@faa.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Kawehi Lum'.

W. Kawehi Lum for
Hugh Thomas
Acting Executive Director, Flight Standards Service