

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N 8900.767

National Policy

Effective Date:
2/13/26

Cancellation Date:
2/13/27

SUBJ: New Mandatory OpSpec A134, Merit-Based Pilot Hiring, for Certificate Holders Conducting Operations Under 14 CFR Part 121

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice announces the publication of a new mandatory Operations Specification (OpSpec) A134, Merit-Based Pilot Hiring, for certificate holders conducting operations under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121.

2. Audience. The primary audience for this notice is Flight Standards (FS) Safety Assurance principal inspectors (PI) and aviation safety inspectors (ASI) with oversight responsibility for certificate holders conducting operations under 14 CFR part 121. The secondary audience includes FS personnel within the Safety Standards and Foundational Business offices.

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. Background. On January 21, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, and a Presidential Action titled Keeping Americans Safe in Aviation. In keeping with these actions, and consistent with the FAA's mission to provide the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world, the FAA developed OpSpec A134.

5. Discussion.

a. Regulatory Basis. Title 49 of the United States Code (49 U.S.C.) § 44701(b) and (d) authorizes and contains requirements for the FAA to prescribe minimum safety standards for air carriers. Title 49 U.S.C. § 44701(d)(1) requires the FAA to consider the duty of an air carrier to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest.

b. OpSpec. In accordance with 14 CFR §§ 119.49(a)(14), (b)(14), and 119.51, the FAA is issuing a new OpSpec A134. This OpSpec acknowledges minimum regulatory requirements defined in 14 CFR and the importance of merit-based hiring that requires a certificate holder to identify candidates whose specific experience and technical aptitude align with the complexities of their specific operating environment.

c. Training Program Safety Performance. Operational safety of 14 CFR part 121 air carriers is fundamentally dependent upon the knowledge and proficiency of its flight crewmembers. Part 121 subparts N, O, Y, and appendices E and F establish rigorous training and qualification standards. The effectiveness of these training programs is enhanced when new-hire pilot applicants enter training possessing a verified baseline of technical knowledge, cognitive skills, and piloting qualifications and experience.

d. Alignment with Safety Management Systems (SMS). Certificate holders with an SMS are required to manage operational risk. Merit-based pilot hiring can provide proactive inputs to an operator's SMS and enhances the operator's ability to manage and mitigate potential risks effectively, thereby contributing to the overall safety and efficiency of their operations.

6. Action. Principal Operations Inspectors (POI) with oversight of certificate holders conducting 14 CFR part 121 operations will:

a. Within 2 business days of the publication of this notice, issue a notification letter to the part 121 air carrier(s) they oversee. A notification letter template is included in Appendix A.

b. After consideration of all material presented by the certificate holder, if any, notify the certificate holder by letter of the adoption, partial adoption, or withdrawal of the proposed amendment.

c. Issue OpSpec A134 no later than 30 days after completion of step b above. See Appendices B and C.

Note: For additional information regarding the procedure for nonemergency administrator-initiated OpSpec amendments, refer to FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 3, Chapter 18, Section 8, Paragraph 3-1029, Amendment of OpSpecs.

7. Disposition. We will incorporate the information in this notice into FAA Order 8900.1 before this notice expires. Direct questions or comments concerning the information in this notice to the Air Transportation Division (AFS-200) at 9-AFS-200-Correspondence@faa.gov or 202-267-8166.



Hugh Thomas
Acting Executive Director, Flight Standards Service

Appendix A. Notification Letter Template

[FAA Letterhead]

[Insert date]

[Insert name of addressee]

[Insert address]

Dear [Insert name of addressee]:

In accordance with 14 CFR §§ 119.49(a)(14), (b)(14), and 119.51(a) and (b), the FAA is issuing a new mandatory Operations Specification (OpSpec) A134, Merit-Based Pilot Hiring. This OpSpec acknowledges minimum regulatory requirements defined in 14 CFR and the importance of merit-based hiring that requires a certificate holder to identify candidates whose specific experience and technical aptitude align with the complexities of their specific operating environment.

Operational safety of 14 CFR part 121 air carriers is fundamentally dependent upon the knowledge and proficiency of its flight crewmembers. Part 121 subparts N, O, Y, and appendices E and F establish rigorous training and qualification standards. The effectiveness of these training programs is enhanced when new-hire pilot applicants enter training possessing a verified baseline of technical knowledge, cognitive skills, and piloting qualifications and experience.

[INSERT CARRIER NAME] may submit written information, views, and arguments on the amendment within seven days of the date of this letter. After consideration of any material presented, the FAA will notify [INSERT CARRIER NAME] of the disposition of OpSpec A134. OpSpec A134 will become effective 30 days after receipt of such notification, if it is adopted.

If you have any questions, contact me at [insert phone number] or email me at [insert email address].

Sincerely,

[Insert name and title of person letter is from]

Appendix B. Sample OpSpec A134, Merit-Based Pilot Hiring: 14 CFR Part 121

U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Operations Specifications

A134. Merit-Based Pilot Hiring

HQ Control: 02/13/2026
HQ Revision: 000

a. The certificate holder shall ensure pilot hiring is exclusively merit-based to fulfill its duty to provide the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest.

-
1. Issued by the Federal Aviation Administration.
 2. These Operations Specifications are approved by direction of the Administrator.

3. I hereby accept and receive the Operations Specifications in this paragraph.

Date

Appendix C. Sample OpSpec A134, Merit-Based Pilot Hiring: 14 CFR Part 121/135

U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
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Operations Specifications

A134. Merit-Based Pilot Hiring

HQ Control: 02/13/2026
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