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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. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Subject: Transportation of Human Organs in the Cabin of an Aircraft used in Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Part 121 Operations.

Purpose: This InFO provides information to air carriers conducting part 121 operations on the transport of human organs¹ in the cabin of an aircraft.

Background: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024, Section 1102, Transportation of Organs, set forth a requirement for the FAA to establish a working group to assist in developing best practices for transport of human organs in the cabin of an aircraft operating under part 121. Accordingly, the FAA established the Organ Transplant Working Group (OTWG). The working group was comprised of members from the FAA, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as well as airlines, airline unions, organ couriers, organ procurement organizations, organ transplant hospitals, and patient representatives. The final report of the workgroup included a recommendation that the FAA publish information related to regulations that would allow for the transport of human organs in the cabin of a part 121 commercial flight. This InFO provides the recommended information.

Discussion: Current statutes and regulations do not explicitly prevent or require an air carrier to transport human organs in the cabin of an aircraft. Transport of human organs can be undertaken at the discretion of the air carrier. While part 121 does not specifically address transport of human organs in an aircraft cabin, it does contain regulations governing an air carrier's approved weight and balance control, and carry-on baggage programs. These regulations apply if an air carrier elects to transport human organs. When a carrier elects such transport, approved weight and balance and carry-on baggage programs should include requirements, notifications, flightcrew and flight attendant training, specific to human organ transport. Organs being transported in the aircraft cabin will normally be accompanied by a courier. Procedures for an air carrier allowing transport of human organs should include obtaining information from the organ courier regarding organ containers and packaging for review by airline employees, including clarification

¹ Section 1102 of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024 (Public Law 118-63) Defines an Organ as (1) has the meaning given such term in [section 121.2 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations](#); and (A) organ-related tissue; (B) bone marrow; and (C) human cells, tissues, or cellular or tissue-based products (as such term is defined in [section 1271.3\(d\) of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations](#)).

that no dry ice is being used to transport the organ. It is not a current or normal practice for human organs to be transported with dry ice or unaccompanied in the aircraft cabin.

NOTE: The flightdeck/pilot compartment is not considered a part of the cabin.

FAA Regulations: Existing FAA regulations allow air carriers conducting part 121 operations to transport human organs in the aircraft cabin. The following list, while not specific to carriage of human organs, contains relevant applicable operating regulations. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

- 14 CFR Part 5, Safety Management Systems, requires all air carriers conducting part 121 operations to develop and implement a Safety Management System, which includes systematic procedures, practices, and policies for the management of safety risk.
- Section 119.49(a)(9) requires air carriers conducting part 121 operations to have operations specifications (OpSpecs) that include authorization for the method of controlling weight and balance of aircraft.
- Section 121.135(b)(21) requires air carriers conducting part 121 operations to have a manual that contains methods and procedures for maintaining the aircraft weight and center of gravity within approved limits.
- Section 121.153(b) allows an air carrier to use an approved weight and balance control system based on average, assumed, or estimated weight to comply with applicable airworthiness requirements and operating limitations.
- Section 121.285 requires any cargo that is carried in the passenger compartment of an airplane to be carried in compliance with §§121.285(a), (b) and (c).
- Sections 121.415, 121.427 and 121.433 require initial and recurrent training on the duties and responsibilities of all crewmembers and aircraft dispatchers.
- Sections 121.419(a)(1)(ii), 121.427 and 121.433 require initial and recurrent training for pilots and flight engineers on the principles and methods for determining weight and balance, and runway limitations for takeoff and landing for each airplane operated by the air carrier.
- Sections 121.422(a)(2)(ii), 121.427 and 121.433 require initial and recurrent training for aircraft dispatchers to include weight and balance calculations for each aircraft operated by the air carrier.
- Section 121.589 requires air carriers conducting part 121 operations to have an approved Carry-on Baggage program in its OpSpecs.

Operations Specifications (OpSpecs). The OpSpec listed below apply when human organs are transported in the aircraft cabin. FAA policy related to the issuance of these OpSpec is available in FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 3 Chapter 18, Section 3 Part A Operations Specifications—General.

- A011 - Approved Carry-on Baggage Program.
- A096 - Actual Weight Program for All Aircraft.
- A098 - Medium Cabin Aircraft Passenger and Baggage Weight Program.
- A099 - Large Cabin Aircraft Passenger and Baggage Weight Program.

FAA Advisory Circulars (AC) (current editions). The ACs listed below apply to items carried in the aircraft cabin.

- [AC 120-27](#) - Aircraft Weight and Balance Control.
- [AC 120-48](#) - Communication and Coordination Between Flightcrew Members and Flight Attendants.
- [AC 121-29](#) - Carry-On Baggage.

The FAA's Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM) - Use of the "MEDEVAC" Call sign for Priority Handling. [Chapter 4, Section 2 of the AIM \(Radio Communications Phraseology and Techniques Air Traffic Control\)](#), contains information on air ambulance flights and the appropriate use of the "MEDEVAC" call sign to obtain priority handling by Air Traffic Control (ATC). The information contained in the AIM does support the use of the "MEDEVAC" call sign by an air carrier responding to an emergency by transporting urgently needed lifesaving medical materials or vital organs. However, it's important to note that the AIM states: "Because of the priority afforded air ambulance flights in the ATC system, extreme discretion is necessary when using the term "MEDEVAC." It is only intended for those missions of an urgent medical nature and to be utilized only for that portion of the flight requiring priority handling." The AIM also states the following:

- To receive priority handling from ATC, the pilot of the flight must, per the AIM, verbally identify the flight in radio transmissions by stating "MEDEVAC" followed by the FAA authorized call sign.
- When filing a flight plan, [an air carrier and/or] a pilot may include "L" for MEDEVAC with the aircraft registration letters/digits and/or include "MEDEVAC" in Item 11 (Remarks) of the flight plan or Item 18 (Other Information) of a flight plan filed in the international format. However, ATC will only use these flight plan entries for informational purposes or as a visual indicator. Flight plan entries will not gain a flight priority handling. ATC will only provide priority handling when the pilot verbally identifies the "MEDEVAC" status of the flight through verbal identification by stating "MEDEVAC" followed by the FAA authorized call sign.

Recommended Action: Part 121 directors of safety, directors of operations, and training managers for air carriers electing to transport human organs in the aircraft cabin should ensure that such transport is part of the air carrier's approved weight and balance, carry-on baggage, aircraft dispatcher, and crewmember training programs.

Contact: Direct questions or comments regarding this InFO to the Air Transportation Division at 9-AFS-200-Correspondence@faa.gov.