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**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# 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.*

**Subject:** Minimum Crew Requirement for Boarding and Presence of Federal Air Marshals

**Purpose:** This InFO provides guidance to air carriers regarding the initial boarding of Federal Air Marshals (FAM) and their presence onboard aircraft during crew changes. It supersedes FSAT 04-06, dated 12/10/04.

**Discussion:**

**a.** Minimum Crewmember Requirements. Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121, sections 121.391 and 121.393, require a minimum number of flight attendants to be present during passenger-carrying service.

**b.** The Federal Air Marshal Service has identified a vital need for the clarification of the status of FAMs during passenger-carrying service and recommends that FAMs be considered trusted agents. This initiative is a result of a culmination of events in the post-September 11 era. The combination of the buildup of FAMs and the manpower reallocation by air carriers that previously provided escort services to the Federal Air Marshal Service force has dictated a change in status so that FAMs can remain anonymous.

**c.** Early in the Federal Air Marshal Service program, FAM numbers were smaller and air carriers easily facilitated Federal Air Marshal Service's missions by escorting them to the aircraft prior to general boarding beyond the view of waiting passengers. Air carriers seldom refused to escort FAMs. As the volume of FAM teams traveling on a daily basis continued to increase, they were provided fewer escort services due to the air carrier's concurrent staffing reductions. Accordingly, FAM teams have been obliged to board the aircraft via the jet way, often in public view of the passengers waiting to board. The FAM teams have been required to wait for the full complement of flight attendants to arrive prior to boarding the aircraft. Often, FAMs are boarded only minutes before or during the general boarding process, greatly hampering their inconspicuous airport movement.

**d.** On originating flights, often the last required cabin crewmember arrives only minutes before general passenger boarding, which causes the waiting FAM team to board with the passengers. Boarding with the passengers only allows limited dialogue with the greeting flight

attendant and a brief introduction with the captain. In this situation, the entire cabin crew has not met the FAM team, resulting in the cabin crew's inability to recognize or authenticate the FAM team should the need arise. Instances of hurried or no introduction with other armed law enforcement personnel often occurs during this boarding sequence as well.

e. On international flights, there currently are occasions where FAMs are not authorized to deplane with their firearms due to a country's weapons laws. However, in some of these situations, the air carrier changes the entire crew. Some air carriers would not allow the FAMs to remain on the aircraft without adequate crewmember staffing.

**Recommended action:** Directors of safety, directors of operations, trainers, and pilots and flight attendants should be familiar with:

a. Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (49 CFR) part 1544, section 1544.223, states that each aircraft operator is required to carry FAMs, in the number and manner specified by the Federal Air Marshal Service, on each scheduled passenger operation, and public charter passenger operation designated by the Federal Air Marshal Service.

b. FAMs are to be considered trusted agents necessary for the safety/security of a flight, as listed in 14 CFR part 121, section 121.583(a)(4)(i), thereby relieving certificate holders of the requirements prescribed in part 121, including section 121.391, which refers to minimum crew requirements. Therefore, FAMs are allowed to board or remain on the aircraft without the necessity of adhering to minimum crew requirements.

**Contact:** Please direct questions about this InFO to the Air Transportation Division, AFS-200 at (202) 267-8166.