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InFO

Information for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

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: False Alerts on 406 Megahertz (MHz) Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELT)

Purpose: This InFO provides awareness to aircraft operators and pilots on the problem of ELT false alerts. It also provides recommendations and additional information for the prevention of false alerts.

Background: In 2017, ELTs generated 8,786 false alerts in the United States. The majority of 406 MHz ELT false alerts occur during testing and maintenance.

Discussion: A false alert is a non-distress activation of a 406 MHz emergency beacon (either an ELT, Personal Locator Beacon [PLB], or Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon [EPIRB] for maritime use). It can be caused by accidental activation during testing, mishandling, improper installation, or unfamiliarity with beacon operation. Search and Rescue (SAR) personnel respond immediately to every activation of a 406 MHz SAR Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) beacon. This response will stop only when it has been proven that the activation was a false alert. Because of this, every false alert has the potential to put rescuers in harm's way and waste valuable resources. A method to help save time and resources for SAR personnel is to have a registered ELT. The simplest and quickest way for SAR personnel to confirm a false alert is to place a phone call to the person to whom the ELT is registered. They do this using the information provided by the beacon owner in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) SARSAT Beacon Registration Database system.

Recommended Action: Aircraft operators and pilots should familiarize themselves with the information contained in this InFO. In addition, to help prevent false alerts, aircraft operators, and pilots should consider the following:

- Ensure that ELT self-tests and annual tests are conducted according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Register ELTs at www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov. Keep contact information up to date after registration.
- If the ELT is accidentally activated, cancel the false alert by calling the U.S. Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at 1-800-851-3051 or the nearest Federal Aviation Administration Air Traffic facility and provide the beacon's hex ID.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the General Aviation and Commercial Division's Commercial Operations Branch at (202) 267-1100. For further information visit: www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov or www.sarsat.noaa.gov and 1-888-212-SAVE (7283).