

Two Hot Issues

HELLO, everyone. I hope the winter months were good to you, and that spring is “springing” wherever you are located. There are two hot issues that I need to talk to you about.

Reporting Disqualifying Medical Conditions

There seems to be a misunderstanding regarding the requirement to report disqualifying medical conditions. Allegedly, an advocacy group has been telling pilots with current medical certificates that it is not necessary to report new disqualifying conditions (conditions that would require a special issuance) or the new use of potentially



disqualifying medications until their next examination.

This information is correct if pilots refrain from flying. However, it would not be acceptable to continue to fly without notifying the FAA about the change(s) and getting a new restricted medical certificate.

While we cannot require pilots to surrender their certificate if they have held it for more than 60 days without taking some type of formal enforcement action, pilots are restricted from flying as pilot in command, or in any other capacity as a required pilot in such situations by 14 CFR 61.53 (a) (1) and (a) (2).

The 61.53 paragraphs pertain to all medically disqualifying situations. For example, if a pilot were to suffer a fractured arm, he or she could not fly while recovering. However, it would be perfectly acceptable for the pilot to return to flying when completely recovered and not suffering any residual functional problems.

In such a case, the individual could wait until the next examination to notify the FAA. If you have any questions on this issue, please call your Regional Flight Surgeon, who will be happy to discuss it with you.

Airman Medical and Student Pilot Certificates

The second item is related to a change in reporting requirements for the issuance of the combination Airman Medical and Student Pilot Certificate. You may be aware that a rule change has been proposed that will require a photo on all pilot certificates. If (or when) this rule change goes into effect, the combination certificate will be eliminated, and student pilots will have to visit a Flight Standards District Office to obtain their student pilot certificate.

‘Throughout their career, pilots see you more often than any FAA employee’

In the meantime, the Transportation Security Administration has asked us to reduce the reporting time for such certificates. You are now required to transmit these examinations within seven days of issuance. This requirement only pertains to combination certificates, and you still have 14 days for all other examinations. Again, if you have any questions, please contact your Regional Flight Surgeon for clarification.

In closing, I want to repeat how much I appreciate what you do for the FAA and the airmen you examine. Throughout their career, pilots see you more often than any FAA employee. Make sure you take a few minutes to talk with them about flying, aviation safety, airplanes, and preventive health measures. You play a crucial role in the safety of the National Air Space System.

—Fred

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