



# Federal Air Surgeon's Medical Bulletin

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For FAA Aviation Medical Examiners, Office of Aerospace Medicine Personnel,  
Flight Standards Inspectors, and Other Aviation Professionals.



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Federal Aviation Administration

## Hooray!

*New Rule Now In Effect*

HELLO, EVERYONE. IT'S official: Effective July 20, individuals with a special issuance are no longer required to have their authorization letter with them while aviating. I realize that I informed you about this change in my last editorial, but this is such a significant change that I think it bears repeating.

The news may not amount to a hill of beans to many of the pilots you examine simply because most of them meet Federal Aviation Administration medical standards and do not require a special issuance (waiver). In fact, many of them may not even be aware that there are such letters, but they probably will be affected by this change as they get older and might require a special issuance of their own.

The requirement to carry the letter stemmed from an audit of the FAA by

### The Federal Air Surgeon's Column



By Fred Tilton, MD

the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) that took place in 2007. At that time, the auditor, without consulting the ICAO Medical Officer, insisted that ICAO International Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPS) required that we include all disqualifying medical conditions on an applicant's medical certificate.

While we vigorously pushed back, we could not convince the auditor that he was wrong. However, we were finally able to get him to agree that the disqualifying information was contained in the authorization letter, and that we could meet the intent of the SARPS by requiring the individual to carry the letter while flying.

Shortly after we announced the requirement to carry the letter, we began to get complaints from airmen and aviation organizations that the obligation to show it to inspectors was an unnecessary violation of the airman's privacy. We agreed with them and so did the ICAO Medical Officer, and he helped us get the ruling reversed. While it has taken a long time, we are finally there, but we still have a couple of issues to deal with.

The paper medical certificates and the computerized MedXpress certificates have a note on the back

that says: "A letter of authorization (or SODA) describing any such limitations must be kept with this certificate at all times while exercising the privileges of an airman certificate."

We are working on the programming changes necessary to modify MedXpress, but we cannot modify the paper forms because it would not be cost effective to do so before October 1.

We also do not plan to issue replacement certificates to everyone who has been issued a certificate with the obsolete language. So, for some time, individuals will be carrying certificates with the outdated language on the back.

I also want to make it clear that even though the entire note will go away, airmen with a SODA will still be required to have their SODA with them when they fly.

You may be asking yourself, *What can I do?* You might be surprised to know that you interact with airmen more than anyone else in the FAA. So if any of the airmen you examine have special issuances, please take a few extra minutes to explain these changes.

If you have questions about this issue or any other issue, call your Regional Flight Surgeon. He or she is "up-to-speed" on all of the latest information and is ready to help so that we can provide the best service to the airmen we support.

Thank you for your help with implementing these changes, and as always, thank you for everything you do for the airmen you take care of.

*Cheers!*

—Fred

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