**U.S. Department
of Transportation**
Federal Aviation
Administration

Advisory Circular

Subject: Mentoring Training for Pilots in Command

Date: 3/3/20   **AC No:** 121-43
Initiated by: AFS-200   **Change:**

1   **PURPOSE OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR (AC).** This AC presents guidelines for developing and implementing mentoring training for pilots in command (PIC). These guidelines apply to air carriers, operators, and program managers conducting pilot training and qualification under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121. This AC presents one way, but not necessarily the only way, that air carriers, operators, and program managers may comply with the mentoring training requirements in part 121 subpart N. 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. This AC may also provide valuable information to other air carriers and operators operating under 14 CFR part 125 or 135 and other program managers operating under 14 CFR part 91 subpart K (part 91K).

2   **AUDIENCE.** The primary audience for this AC is air carrier, operator, and program manager personnel involved in the development and conduct of PIC mentoring training.

3   **WHERE YOU CAN FIND THIS AC.** You can find this AC on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) website at http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/advisory_circulars.

4   **RELATED REGULATIONS.** The following 14 CFR sections may be found at http://www.ecfr.gov.

   • Section 91.1063, Testing and Training: Applicability and Terms Used.

   • Section 121.419, Pilots and Flight Engineers: Initial, Transition, Conversion, and Upgrade Ground Training.

   • Section 121.420, Pilots: Upgrade Ground Training.

   • Section 121.427, Recurrent Training.

   • Section 121.429, Pilots in Command: Leadership and Command and Mentoring Training.

   • Section 135.3, Rules Applicable to Operations Subject to This Part.

5   RELATED REFERENCES.

- *Designing Workplace Mentoring Programs: An Evidence-Based Approach*, Tammy D. Allen, Lisa M. Finkelstein, and Mark L. Poteet.

- *Managers as Mentors: Building Partnerships for Learning*, Chip R. Bell and Marshall Goldsmith.

6   BACKGROUND.

6.1   Accidents.

6.1.1   On October 14, 2004, a Pinnacle Airlines Bombardier CL-600-2B19, operating as Northwest Airlink Flight 3701, crashed into a residential area about 2.5 miles from the Jefferson City Memorial Airport, Jefferson City, Missouri. During the flight, both engines flamed out after a pilot-induced aerodynamic stall and were unable to be restarted. Both pilots were killed and the airplane was destroyed. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) determined the pilots' unprofessional behavior, deviation from standard operating procedures (SOP), failure to prepare for an emergency landing in a timely manner, and improper management of the double engine failure checklist contributed to the accident.

6.1.2   On February 12, 2009, a Colgan Air Bombardier DHC-8-400, operating as Continental Connection Flight 3407, crashed about 5 nautical miles northeast of the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport while on an instrument approach. The 4 crewmembers, 45 passengers, and 1 person on the ground were killed and the airplane was destroyed by impact forces and a post-crash fire. The NTSB determined that the pilots' failure to adhere to sterile cockpit procedures and the PIC's failure to effectively manage the flight contributed to the accident. The Colgan Air accident focused public and Congressional attention on multiple aspects of existing air carrier training requirements, including whether pilots have access to individuals, such as more experienced pilots, who could serve as mentors.

6.2   Pilot Professional Development Final Rule. On February 25, 2020, the FAA issued the Pilot Professional Development Final Rule. This Final Rule includes amendments to part 121 subpart N to require mentoring training for PICs. This amendment is effective April 27, 2020. Compliance with the PIC mentoring training requirements in §§ 121.419 and 121.420 is required by April 27, 2022. Compliance with the PIC mentoring training requirements in § 121.429 is required by April 27, 2023.

7   PIC MENTORING TRAINING. Mentoring training includes techniques for instilling and reinforcing the highest standards of technical performance, airmanship, and professionalism in newly employed pilots. In accordance with §§ 121.419, 121.420, 121.427, and 121.429, mentoring training must include instruction and facilitated discussion. In accordance with §§ 121.419, 121.420, and 121.427, this training must be included in the PIC upgrade curriculum, PIC initial curriculum, and PIC recurrent ground training. Further, in accordance with § 121.429, all current PICs must complete a one-time training on mentoring skills. The following are suggested topics for PIC

mentoring training. Each air carrier/operator/program manager should tailor these topics to their specific organizational culture and operations. This training may be presented by distance instruction as long as the mentoring training objectives can be satisfied.

7.1 **Definition of Mentoring.** There are many definitions of mentoring currently in use throughout various professions. In a broad sense, mentoring consists of a more experienced individual (the mentor) offering advice, encouragement, guidance, and support to a less experienced individual (the protégé). A mentor or protégé may seek out a specific mentor/protégé pairing. Alternatively, mentor/protégé pairings may occur on an ad hoc basis based on factors such as scheduling or availability. Mentoring involves career support and development, psychosocial support, and role modeling.

7.2 **Objectives.** The objectives of mentoring should be developed based on the organizational needs of the air carrier/operator/program manager. General objectives are to improve employee knowledge, skills, abilities, and competence. Additional benefits could include improving pilot professionalism and skill building, which could enhance Crew Resource Management (CRM), pilot decision-making, and interactions with other employees and customers.

7.3 **Role of a Mentor and Developing Mentoring Skills.** The role of the mentor will be influenced by the specific objectives of mentoring set by the air carrier/operator/program manager. Effective mentoring skills include, but are not limited to:

- Good listening and effective communication skills;

- Being approachable and responsive to protégés;

- Credibility and integrity;

- Technical expertise and job-related knowledge; and

- Empathy and patience. Remembering your own experiences as a newly employed pilot can help to develop empathy for a protégé.

7.4 **Structure and Boundaries for the Mentor–Protégé Relationship.** An air carrier/operator/program manager should clearly describe the following:

- Expectations regarding the confidentiality of discussions between a mentor and protégé; and

- When or if a mentor should share information about a protégé with management.

7.5 **Communication Considerations.** A mentor should have a willingness to share their knowledge with a protégé in a supportive and encouraging manner. A mentor should be honest, but not overly critical when providing feedback to a protégé. Consideration should be given to the format in which contact is made, the frequency of contacts, as well as the types of topics that may be covered. An air carrier/operator/program manager may want to define the formats for those contacts (e.g., in person, telephone, email, video conferencing, or other electronic means).

7.6 Practical Exercises. Practical exercises should be conducted using a facilitated discussion and should focus on improving positive mentoring experiences and avoiding negative mentoring experiences. Role-playing exercises allow a mentor to practice interacting with a protégé under situations that might occur on the job. The following are examples of role-playing exercises:

7.6.1 Example 1: Professionalism. The protégé makes an announcement of potential turbulence to the passengers. The announcement is made in such a manner that many of the passengers are upset. The mentor should counsel the protégé regarding the proper manner for making such announcements, with care not to be too negative toward the protégé but still effectively making the point.

7.6.2 Example 2: Resolving Interpersonal Problems. The protégé complains to the mentor about another PIC. The mentor should counsel the protégé in such a way as to not disparage the other coworker or blame the protégé unjustly, and potentially reach a positive resolution to the problem.

8 INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATION. The key to effective mentoring training is a properly trained and qualified instructor who possesses the necessary experience, academic knowledge, and skills applicable to the specific air carrier/operator/program manager's mentoring training.

8.1 Instructor Training. In accordance with § 121.401(a), each air carrier/operator/program manager must provide properly qualified ground instructors. Therefore, the FAA recommends instructor training include the following:

- The topics as outlined in paragraph 7; and

- How to effectively lead a facilitated discussion. This training should include practice conducting a facilitated discussion using the air carrier/operator/program manager's delivery method (e.g., classroom or distance instruction).

8.2 Additional Instructor Skills. Instructors should also have the following skills:

- Good listening and effective communication skills;

- Being approachable and responsive to students;

- Credibility and integrity; and

- Sufficient knowledge of flightcrew member roles to effectively facilitate role-playing exercises.

9 CREDIT FOR PREVIOUS MENTORING TRAINING. Section 121.429 allows credit toward all or part of the requirements for mentoring training for current PICs. In accordance with § 121.429(b)(1), the credit must be based on mentoring training previously completed with that air carrier/operator/program manager after April 27, 2017 and prior to April 27, 2020.

9.1 **Request Process.** An air carrier/operator/program manager who has voluntarily provided mentoring training to PICs may seek credit for all or part of the requirements for mentoring training for current PICs. To seek credit, an air carrier should submit the following information to the Principal Operations Inspector (POI):

- Outline of the training module(s) for mentoring training with sufficient detail to determine if some, or all, of the principal elements, as outlined in paragraph 7, were included;

- Description of the training aids, devices, methods, and procedures used during mentoring training; and

- Description of the recordkeeping method used by the air carrier/operator/program manager to determine if each PIC has completed all or part of the requirements of mentoring training.

9.2 **Evaluation Process.** To ensure a consistent determination of whether the previous training met some or all of the requirements, the FAA established a focus team, consisting of FAA subject matter experts (SME), to evaluate all requests for credit. The POI will forward the air carrier/operator/program manager's request to the focus team. To determine whether credit should be granted, the focus team will conduct an evaluation of the information submitted. The focus team will consider the training aids, devices, methods, and procedures as well as the content of the training module as compared to the guidelines presented in this AC. The focus team, through the POI, may request additional supporting information, such as courseware, lesson plans, or instructor guides, if necessary for a thorough evaluation.

9.3 **Notification Process.** After completing the evaluation, the focus team, through the POI, will notify the air carrier/operator/program manager by letter whether credit toward all or part of the requirements for mentoring training is granted.

9.4 **Recordkeeping.** If credit is granted, in accordance with § 91.1027, § 121.683, or § 135.63, as applicable, the air carrier/operator/program manager must enter a record into the recordkeeping system for each PIC. The record must document the credit granted to meet all or part of the requirements of § 121.429. The record should reference the letter provided by the POI.

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