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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: Crewmember Manuals

Purpose: This InFO clarifies regulatory requirements regarding accessibility and use of crewmember manuals while crewmembers are performing assigned duties.

Background: Recently, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a legal interpretation in which it clarified that an electronic version of a manual is satisfactory. This interpretation also clarified that if a manual is provided in electronic form, the certificate holder must provide sufficient technological resources to permit crewmembers “to review effectively the applicable portions of the manual while performing their duties.” Since this legal interpretation was issued, the FAA has received several additional requests for clarification regarding crewmember manual requirements (paper and electronic).

Discussion: Crewmember manual requirements are contained in Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 121, §§ 121.135 and 121.137. These sections contain the requirements for a certificate holder’s entire manual system and allow the part 121 requirements to be met by developing and issuing different volumes of the entire manual system (“appropriate portions of the manual” e.g. flight operations manual (FOM), flight attendant manual (FAM), Airplane Flight Manual (AFM), general maintenance manual, etc) to different employee groups, as appropriate.

These “appropriate portions of the manual” must contain procedures that allow each employee group to conduct its duties with the highest degree of safety. For example, the FOM used by flightcrew members, the FAM used by flight attendants (F/A) and Minimum Equipment List (MEL) for each aircraft type operated by the certificate holder are all examples of parts of “the manual” required by §§ 121.135 and 121.137.

Section 121.137(a)(2) requires a certificate holder to supply copies of the manual, or appropriate parts of the manual, with changes and additions, to its crewmembers. Section 121.137(b) requires each person who is supplied a manual, or part of a manual, to keep it current and to have it accessible when performing assigned duties.

Interpretation 1988-7

The interpretation, issued on November 7, 2011; clarifies, among other things, that an electronic version of the manual is one of several forms of acceptable media for a crewmember manual. Prior to the recent interpretation, Interpretation 1988-7 originally clarified methods of compliance with the intent of § 121.137 (b) regarding air carriers who may wish to provide part of the manual via a

“ship’s copy” or crewmembers to whom a manual is personally issued. The following examples are consistent with those methods of compliance:

- (1) The certificate holder issues personal copies of the manual (e.g. a FOM issued to a pilot or a FAMS issued to a F/A) to crewmembers. The crewmember is then required to keep the manual current and carry it with them while serving as a crewmember.
- (2) The certificate holder does not issue personal copies of the manual to crewmembers. Instead, the certificate holder keeps copies of the manual(s) onboard their aircraft for crewmembers to use while serving as a crewmember and requires crewmembers to verify that the manual(s) in the “ships library” are current before flight.
- (3) The certificate holder issues a personal copy of some manuals to crewmembers, which they must keep current and carry while flying. The certificate holder keeps other manuals in the “ship’s library” and requires crewmembers to verify that the manual(s) in the “ships library” are current before flight. A typical example of this scenario would be to issue personal copies of FOMs to pilots and FAMS to F/As, but keep a current copy of the AFM and the MEL for that type aircraft in the “ship’s library” .

Operational Procedures

Certificate holders have the flexibility to decide which manuals will be issued to individual crewmembers and which manuals will be contained in the “ship’s library” on an individual aircraft. Certificate holders also have the flexibility to determine if manuals will be furnished in paper form or electronic form, as long as certain conditions are met. If the decision is made by a certificate holder to issue a personal copy of a manual to a crewmember, whether in paper or electronic form, the crewmember is required by § 121.137(b) to keep the manual current and carry the manual with them while flying.

NOTE: These requirements are consistently enforced during routine inspections by Aviation Safety Inspectors (ASI). Incidents of non-compliance are generally addressed with civil penalties.

- (1) Personal copies of manuals that have been issued to an individual may not be instantly “shared” with other crewmembers who are missing their manual so that crewmember can meet the requirements of § 121.137(b). Section 121.137(b) speaks to the individual responsibility of each crewmember to carry a personal copy of the manual with them while serving as a crewmember if they have been issued a personal copy.
- (2) When a crewmember discovers that their manual is not current or is missing, the crewmember must update their manual or find a replacement for the missing manual. Procedures to address this situation could include the following:
 - (a) Immediately notify the Captain and the air carrier.
 - (b) Obtain the missing material (e.g. revision, bulletin, or an entire paper or electronic manual) prior to operating the flight.

- At crewmember bases and large stations, replacement copies of crewmember manuals could be maintained and provided to crewmembers by a base supervisor or station manager prior to that crewmember operating the flight.
 - At out stations, missing material or manuals could be faxed or emailed to crewmembers to be printed out prior to that crewmember operating the flight.
 - A crewmember could obtain a current manual from a non-working crewmember on that flight (e.g. deadheader, jumpseater or non revenue passenger).
 - A certificate holder could keep a current copy of crewmember manuals on each individual aircraft to replace a crewmember's personal copy during the flight.
- (3) In addition, personal copies of manuals may not be instantly designated as "ship's library" copies to be shared among crewmembers. If a crewmember is missing a manual that has been issued to that crewmember, the crewmember must obtain a replacement for that personal copy of the manual prior to working a flight.

Recommended Action: Air carriers should ensure that their procedures are consistent with the requirements of §121.137(b). Directors of Safety, Directors of Operations, crewmembers and training managers should be aware of the regulatory requirements regarding accessibility and use of crewmember manuals while crewmembers are performing assigned duties as discussed in this InFO.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the Air Transportation Division, AFS-200 at (202) 267-8166.