



September 2026 Special Edition

The Airman Testing Community Advisory (ATCA) is produced by the General Aviation and Commercial Division, Training and Certification Group, Testing Standards Section, the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) office responsible for practical test and airman certification standards, certification testing programs, and supporting reference materials. This advisory provides an additional channel for change management communications to our stakeholders and supports the correlation of training and testing for an effective certification process.

Stakeholder Communications

You are encouraged to submit questions and comments about our products and services by emailing us at TestingStandardsComments@faa.gov. This email address replaces the previous afs630comments@faa.gov address.

Please continue to email comments related to Practical Test Standards (PTS) and Airman Certification Standards (ACS) to acsptsinquiries@faa.gov.

Standards

Sport Pilot Practical Test Standards (PTS)

14 CFR part 61.14(a)(12), (13) and (14), Incorporation by Reference (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-61/subpart-A/section-61.14>) has been amended and is effective 09/14/2026. Sport Pilot and Flight Instructors with a Sport Pilot Rating PTS for Airplane Category, Rotorcraft Category Gyroplane, and Glider Category (FAA-S-8081-29A); Sport Pilot and Flight Instructors with a Sport Pilot Rating PTS for Lighter-Than-Air Category (FAA-S-8081-30A); and Sport Pilot and Flight Instructors with a Sport Pilot Rating PTS for Powered Parachute Category and Weight-Shift-Control Aircraft Category (FAA-S-8081-31A) have been revised to harmonize with the Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certificate (MOSAIC) final rule and are now available at [Practical Test Standards](#).

Reference Materials

The Testing Standards Section continually evaluates our internal processes for developing, revising, and maintaining reference materials to ensure programmatic efficiency and greater agility in keeping pace with advancements in aviation safety and technology.

Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT)

Airman Certification Oral and Practical Project

The Testing Standards Section and the Airman Certification Standards Exam Board (AEB) have implemented, and continue to implement, several improvements that directly support the goals of reducing administrative burden, improving consistency, minimizing human error, and better aligning the testing process with real-world maintenance practices.

The recent updates to the practical test bank address many workflow, usability, and standardization concerns identified by stakeholders and Designated Mechanic Examiners (DME).

- **Practical questions have been revised to align directly with assigned projects, Aircraft Maintenance Manuals (AMM), and Advisory Circulars (AC).** This improves consistency between tests and reduces reliance on subjective “look up and explain” questioning. As a result, the testing experience is more streamlined, practical, and better aligned with real-world maintenance environments and industry practices.
- **DMEs have been given greater discretion in determining acceptable answers** based on project details, manufacturer information, and approved reference materials. This supports more efficient and realistic applicant evaluations while maintaining flexibility within standardized guidance.
- **DMEs are encouraged to review revised questions during pretest planning.** This helps ensure smoother transitions during testing and builds familiarity with system updates before applicant testing begins.
- **The solicitation for DME-submitted practical projects and related questions** demonstrates an ongoing commitment to improving integration with real-world examiner workflows. This effort has received positive engagement and continues to strengthen alignment between testing systems and current industry maintenance practices.

Collectively, these actions represent meaningful progress toward the broader goals identified by DMEs, including reducing administrative inefficiencies, minimizing opportunities for human-factor errors, improving examiner usability, and creating a more integrated and practical airman certification process.

For questions or interest in participating in project submissions, contact 9-AVS-Mechanic-Test-Generator@faa.gov.

Practical Test Banks Updates

All Aviation Maintenance Technician practical projects have been reviewed and updated with the new framework.

- **Retesting:** If an applicant took their initial practical test before the activation of the new framework, the retest will be based on the content and requirements that were in effect prior to that activation date.
 - Aviation Mechanic General (AMG) - Changes activated April 20, 2026.
 - Aviation Mechanic Airframe (AMA) - Scheduled for activation July 20, 2026.
 - Aviation Mechanic Powerplant (AMP) - In final review.

- **Guidance Update:** AM.I.L.S1 – Malfunction or Defect Report.
 - For project AM.I.L.S1, the intent is to evaluate the applicant’s ability to accurately complete Form 8010-4, Malfunction or Defect Report. Although the preferred method of submission is through the electronic Service Difficulty Reporting System (SDRS) site, the online system should not be used for this project unless tied to an actual discrepancy. Instead, DMEs should have applicants complete a fillable PDF or a printed copy of Form FAA 8010-4. Guidance on properly completing Form 8010-4 is available in the SDRS Field Instructions (pages 7-11) and AC 20-109B, Service Difficulty Reporting System (Air Operator/Air Agency/General Aviation/Unmanned Aircraft Systems).

Minimum Tools and Equipment List (MTEL) Updates

When revisions to the MTEL require DMEs to obtain new or additional tools, equipment, or materials, prior notification will be issued to designees via this advisory and the Designee Management System (DMS). The current MTEL is available in FAA Order 8900.1, Volume 5, Chapter 5, Section 11. DMEs may submit MTEL feedback to 9-AWA-AFS-300-Correspondence@faa.gov.

DMEs should obtain the following additional tools, equipment, or materials to comply with the upcoming MTEL revisions. Each item lists a target date for inclusion in the MTEL.

- Liquid Penetrant Kit to conduct non-destructive testing (December 2026): AM.I.K.S5

Airman Knowledge Testing

Airman knowledge tests play a crucial role in the certification process, ensuring airmen possess the knowledge required to operate safely within the National Airspace System (NAS).

To uphold the integrity and quality of these knowledge tests, a rigorous review of the questions is essential. Two primary approaches are used to review test questions:

1. **Analyzing Performance Statistics:** Testing Standards Section Subject Matter Experts (SME) collaborate closely with the test development team at PSI Services, LLC, the vendor for the FAA's Airman Certificate Testing Service (ACTS) Contract, to evaluate each question's performance. Questions that do not meet established performance benchmarks are flagged for internal review to ensure they remain equitable and challenging for all test takers.
2. **Examining Candidate Comments:** While taking a knowledge test, candidates can provide feedback on questions they believe may have issues. This feedback provides firsthand insights and is routinely reviewed by SMEs in the Testing Standards Section to determine whether modifications are warranted.

When a question is selected for review, it undergoes a comprehensive analysis. This includes checking for spelling and grammatical accuracy, clarity, consistent terminology, structural integrity, and proper formatting. The review also ensures alignment with FAA regulations, airman certification standards, and FAA reference materials.

The Testing Standards Section is committed to keeping the public informed about significant updates to knowledge testing. While the specifics of active test questions remain confidential, the Testing Standards Section will continue to provide updates on knowledge tests through this advisory. These updates will include information on new test developments, changes to or removal of test content, terminology updates, and advances in test modernization.

Airline Transport Pilot Multiengine Airplane (ATM) Knowledge Test Update

Knowledge test items (test questions) regarding the Bombardier Dash 8 – Q400 aircraft will be removed from the ATM knowledge test beginning October 26, 2026. As of this date, the FAA will no longer test applicants on the Q400 aircraft. This change is the result of public inquiry. The ATM knowledge test is based on 14 CFR part 121, which focuses on air carrier operations. Turboprop aircraft, including the Q400, are no longer being used by airlines (14 CFR part 121 operators). Therefore, it was proposed that the FAA no longer ask turboprop-powered aircraft questions on the ATM knowledge test.

The FAA will continue to present items (test questions) for the Bombardier CRJ900, as this aircraft represents a common entry-level aircraft for pilots working for a part 121 operator.

PSI's Test Taker Portal Transition

PSI is transitioning its certification exams to PSI's Test Taker Portal. This modernization centers on an "airman applicants first" approach, with enhanced technology, streamlined digital processes, improved reliability, and a fully paperless experience. FAA exam content, standards, oversight, and security remain unchanged.

For further questions regarding the technology transition, you may contact PSI at faachangequestions@psionline.com.

Airman Knowledge Test Assessments

The FAA's ACTS contract requires PSI to assess FAA airman knowledge tests to ensure compliance with current standards for educational and psychological testing. This process does not change test question content, and all questions will continue to align with the applicable ACS codes and references. In collaboration with the Testing Standards Section and aviation industry partners, assessments for the following exams are underway.

Flight Instructor:

- Flight Instructor Airplane (FIA)
- Flight Instructor Helicopter (FRH)
- Fundamentals of Instructing (FOI)

Aviation Maintenance Technician:

- Aviation Maintenance Technician General (AMG)
- Aviation Maintenance Technician Airframe (AMA)
- Aviation Maintenance Technician Powerplant (AMP)

Modifications based on the assessments of the exams mentioned above are anticipated to be implemented in 2027.

PSI has created a new resource page for applicants taking mechanic tests accessible at [FAA Aircraft Mechanic Applicants \(AMT\) | PSI Exams](#).

Graphics Conversion Project Update

In partnership with PSI, the Testing Standards Section is upgrading its airman knowledge testing system by embedding images directly in test questions, eliminating the need for printed test supplements. This initiative aims to provide candidates with a more integrated and modern testing experience. Testing Standards Section SMEs review each test question with an embedded image to ensure accuracy. After implementation, PSI's test development team and Testing Standards Section SMEs closely monitor the questions' performance to verify that they meet the intended standards.

Once an image is embedded in a test question, it becomes an integral part of that question. Consequently, the specific images used in active test questions cannot be previewed, as doing so would compromise the exam's integrity.

Candidates preparing for FAA exams are encouraged to visit the PSI True Talent site regularly to access sample test questions and become familiar with the new format.

The following exams feature questions with embedded images:

- Commercial Pilot
- Private Pilot
- Sport Pilot
- Unmanned Aircraft
- Instrument Rating
- Aviation Maintenance Technician (General, Airframe, and Powerplant)
- Parachute Rigger
- Flight Engineer

Effective October 26, 2026, the following exams will feature questions with embedded images:

- Flight Instructor
- Airline Transport Pilot

As the Graphics Conversion Project progresses, we remain committed to transparency. We recognize that some test questions may require specific measuring tools. For those questions, applicants will have the tools they need to respond accurately.

At this time, we cannot provide details about the design or operation of on-screen tools. However, any significant changes or new electronic tools introduced into the testing environment will be communicated, well in advance, via this advisory. This will ensure candidates have ample time to become familiar with the tools.

The date for removing testing supplements from test centers has not yet been set. However, the public will receive ample notice before this change takes effect. Until the removal, candidates will continue to have access to the testing supplement for their exam.

Beginning October 26, 2026*, the Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA) and Unmanned Aircraft General-Small (UAG) tests will include image-based questions not found in the test supplements (see examples below). This update enhances the tests by incorporating clearer, up-to-date images from the latest Sectional Charts, Instrument Approach Charts, and Low Altitude Enroute Charts. The images are sourced from the following FAA materials:

- [VFR Charts](#)
- [IFR Low Altitude Charts](#)

*Corrected date from the previous edition of this advisory.

Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA) Samples

Refer to the figure below to answer the question.



Image from Test Supplement

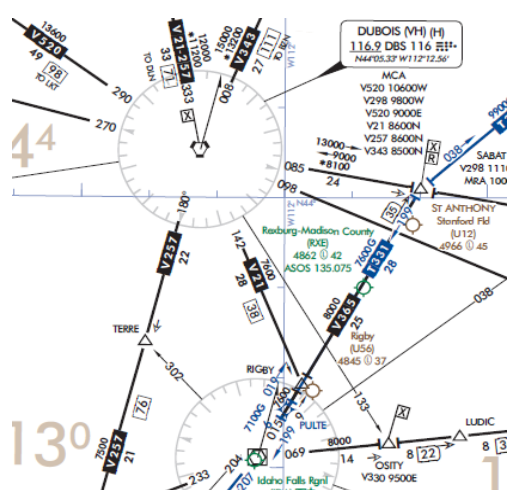
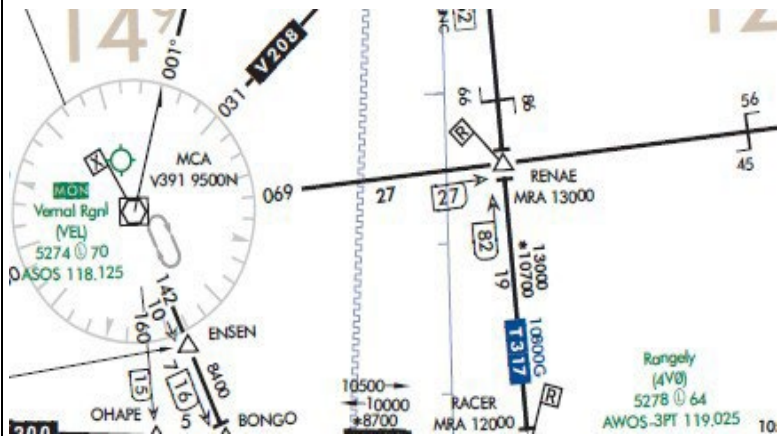


Image from Low Enroute Chart (L-11)

When flying a northbound IFR flight on V21, what is the minimum crossing altitude at DUBOIS (DBS) VORTAC?

- A. 7,500 feet.
- B. 8,600 feet. ✓
- C. 11,100 feet.

Refer to the image below to answer the question.

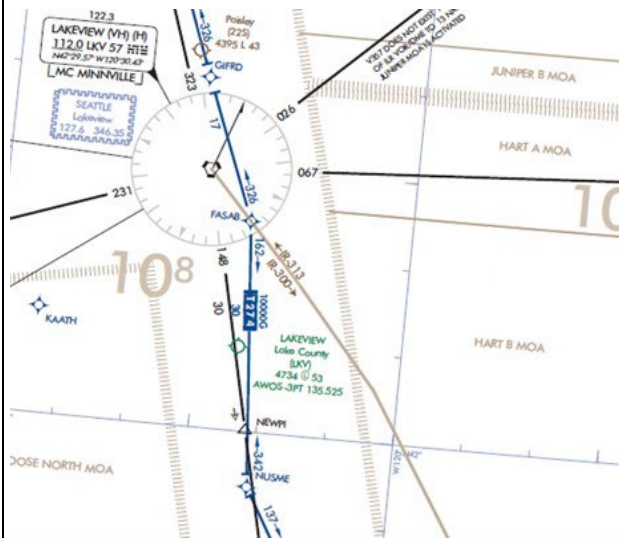


Source: IFR Enroute Low Altitude, L-12; Dated 7 Aug 2025 to 2 Oct 2025

What is indicated by the  flag at RENAE intersection?

- A. The Minimum Reception Altitude is 13,000 feet MSL. ✓
- B. The OROCA altitude is 10,700 feet MSL when south bound.
- C. The Minimum Turning Altitude is 2,700 feet AGL.

Refer to the image below to answer the question.



SOURCE: IFR Enroute Low Altitude-U.S. L-11; Dated 7 Aug 2025 to 2 Oct 2025

What is indicated by IR313/IR300 in the figure?

- A. An IFR Military Training Route. ✓
- B. A low altitude Victor airway.
- C. A WAAS enabled airway.

Unmanned Aircraft General – Small (UAG) Samples

Refer to the image below to answer the question.



Sectional: Washington, dated 12 JUN 2025 to 7 AUG 2025

What type of airspace is associated with MILLVILLE MUNI (MIV) and is ATC authorization required to operate a small UA there?

- A. Class E that is associated with an airport surface area, authorization is required. ✓
- B. Class G that is associated with an operating control tower, authorization is required.
- C. Class B that is under the associated Class D airspace, authorization is not required.

Refer to the image below to answer the question.



Sectional: Las Vegas, dated 12 Jun 2025 to 7 Aug 2025

If GRAND CANYON NTL PARK (GCN) control tower is not in operation, which frequency should be used as a Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF) to monitor airport traffic?

- A. 119.0✓
- B. 124.3
- C. 122.95

Candidate Information Bulletins (CIB)

CIBs contain valuable information for test candidates, including details on examination registration and scheduling procedures, reporting to the examination site, test authorization and reauthorization requirements, and test content specifications.

Below are links to exams with available CIBs. This list will be updated as PSI and the Testing Standards Section finalize evaluations of additional exams.

- [Airline Transport Pilot Multiengine \(ATM\)/Airline Transport Pilot Single Engine Airplane \(ATS\)](#)
- [Commercial Pilot Airplane \(CAX\)](#)
- [Commercial Pilot Helicopter \(CRH\)](#)
- [Instrument Rating Airplane \(IRA\)](#)
- [Instrument Rating Helicopter \(IRH\)](#)
- [Private Pilot Airplane \(PAR\)](#)
- [Private Pilot Helicopter](#)
- [Unmanned Aircraft General \(UAG\)](#)

Learning Statement Codes

The current version of the Learning Statement Reference Guide for Airman Knowledge Testing is available at [Learning Statement Codes](#).

ACS Codes

Of the **91** FAA airman knowledge tests offered, **33** now have ACS codes displayed on the corresponding Airman Knowledge Test Reports (AKTR). The light blue shading of the test code indicates these tests in the [FAA Airman Knowledge Testing Matrix](#).

Matrix

The latest version of the Airman Knowledge Testing Matrix is available at [FAA Airman Knowledge Testing Matrix](#).

A revised FAA Airman Knowledge Testing Matrix will be posted on **September 25, 2026**. This updated Matrix will include clearer language concerning Added Rating tests. See below:

Page 10:

AFA	Flight Instructor Airplane (Added Rating)
AFG	Flight Instructor Glider (Added Rating)
GFA	Flight Instructor Gyroplane (Added Rating)
HFA	Flight Instructor Helicopter (Added Rating)

The above Added Rating tests may be taken ONLY if the applicant already holds a Flight Instructor Certificate. ([14 CFR § 61 Subpart H](#)). **Flight Instructors holding a Glider Rating and seeking to add an Airplane Rating must take the Flight Instructor Airplane (FIA) Knowledge Test.** Added Rating tests do not apply to Flight Instructors with only a Sport Pilot Rating. ([14 CFR § 61 Subpart K](#))

AIF	Flight Instructor Instrument Airplane (Added Rating)
HIF	Flight Instructor Instrument Helicopter (Added Rating)

The above Added Rating tests may be taken **ONLY** if the applicant already holds a Flight Instructor Certificate with an Instrument Rating in another category of aircraft.

Statistics

Airman Knowledge Tests Statistics

The CY 2025, Airman Knowledge Test Statistics, and Test Volume Chart are available at [Airman Knowledge Test Statistics](#).

Frequently Missed Knowledge Test ACS Codes

The Frequently Missed Knowledge Test ACS Codes Report is available at [Missed ACS Codes](#). It is based on Safety Performance and Analysis System (SPAS) data for the specified timeframe, includes ACS codes administered at least 100 times, and displays ACS codes missed on specific knowledge tests more than 70% of the time.