

FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY

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FAA ISSUES 60 AGE LIMIT FOR AIRLINE PILOTS

The Federal Aviation Agency has established 60 as the mandatory retirement age for airline pilots, it was announced by FAA Administrator, E. R. Quesada.

Mr. Quesada pointed out that in the absence of any regulation to the contrary, the growing number of pilots aged 60 and over would substantially increase during the next 5 years with some reaching the 65 to 70 category. There are approximately 40 pilots age 60 or over today. In the next eight years approximately 250 airline pilots will have reached the age of 60. As the number of older pilots increase, they would be responsible for a growing percentage of air carrier operations.

The FAA believes that because of the progressive deterioration of both physiological and psychological functions which normally occur with age, allowing pilots in this age group to remain in command of aircraft carrying up to 165 passengers at speeds of 550 miles per hour would be a hazard to safety in air carrier operations. These deteriorations result in significant medical defects.

The Federal Aviation Agency regulation is based on medical facts that clearly establish that sudden incapacitation due primarily to heart attack and strokes resulting from such defects become significantly more frequent in any group reaching age 60, and such attacks cannot be predicted on an individual basis by prior medical examinations. The hazards are further increased in the case of air carriers on scheduled airlines by the fact that older pilots fly the bigger and faster jets, carrying more passengers over

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Other conditions which result from aging, and which were considered, relate to loss of ability to perform highly skilled tasks rapidly, to resist fatigue, to maintain physical stamina to unlearn or discard old techniques, and to apply the rapid judgment needed in changing and emergency situations.

In amending the Civil Air Regulations to require that "No individual who had reached his 60th birthday shall be utilized or serve as a pilot on any aircraft while engaged in air carrier operations, "the Agency acted in conformance with the responsibility given to the Administrator by the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 that, "In prescribing standards, rules, and regulations... the Administrator shall give full consideration to the duty resting upon air carriers to perform their services with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest..." and that, "The Administrator shall exercise and perform his powers and duties under this Act in such a manner as will best tend to reduce or eliminate the possibility of, or recurrence of, accidents in air transportation..."

The regulation will take effect March 15, 1960.

This regulation does not, however, apply to pilots of small aircraft who operate under Part 42, covering irregular air carrier operations. Such a regulation will be the subject of further study by the Agency, and will be presented as a proposal if considered necessary.

A study of the comments received by the FAA as a result of the proposed rule making indicated that the amendment requiring airline pilots to make the transition to turbo-jets prior to age 55, was the only item which warranted a public hearing, since the purpose of such a hearing is to provide an opportunity to obtain information over and above that which can be secured by written comments. Accordingly, a public hearing on this proposal only has been scheduled for 10:00 A. M. EST on January 7, 1960 at FAA Headquarters, 1711 New York Avenue, N. W.

The proposals to establish these age requirements were published in the Federal Register on June 27 as proposed amendments to Parts 40, 41, and 42 of the Civil Air Regulations and were circulated to interested persons for comment at that time. (Those who wished to express their views on the proposed regulations had 90 days in which to do so). All comments received on the draft proposals were carefully evaluated before the Agency made its final decision.

Requests for a public hearing on the age 60 portion of the proposal indicated no issue not already considered, nor any items not already covered by written comments.

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Arguments were advanced both in favor of and opposition to the proposal. The Air Transport Association representing the major air carriers was in favor of the age 60 regulation, the Air Line Pilots Association was strongly opposed and recommended that pilot fitness should be made on an individual basis with no age qualification.

In rejecting the latter as an inadequate safety standard, the FAA considered the inability of present day medical science to predict in advance on an individual selective basis such sudden incapacitating occurrences as heart attacks or strokes, even where exceptional medical care and examination programs exist.

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