



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Date: June 9, 2016

Contact: Alison Duquette or Les Dorr

Phone: 202-267-3438

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is working with commercial airlines and pilots’ unions to improve mental health evaluations, and encourage voluntary reporting of pilot mental health issues.

An Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) comprised of aviation and medical experts has made [several recommendations](#) about pilot medical fitness.

“Safety is always our first priority and this includes making sure our nation’s commercial pilots undergo robust medical evaluations,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Foxx. “The U.S. commercial aviation community is working together to make sure pilots are able to report, and be treated for, any mental health condition. We must be confident pilots are medically fit when they enter the cockpit.”

“U.S. commercial pilots undergo vigorous and regular medical screening,” said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. “While some conditions automatically disqualify someone from flying, many pilots have treatable conditions. We need to do more to remove the stigma surrounding mental illness in the aviation industry so pilots are more likely to self-report, get treated, and return to work.”

Certain medical conditions, such as a psychosis, bipolar disorder and severe personality disorder automatically disqualify a pilot from obtaining an FAA medical certificate and prohibit them from flying. However, many pilots have conditions that are treatable. Several U.S. airlines already have reporting and monitoring programs that provide pilots with a path to report their condition, be treated for it and return to the cockpit once the FAA has determined – through a thorough evaluation – it is safe to do so. The FAA addresses the medical certificates of those pilots on a case-by-case basis.

The FAA, airlines and pilots' unions considered the ARC's recommendations and agreed to these actions:

- In January, the FAA began enhanced training for Aviation Medical Examiners so they can increase their knowledge on mental health and enhance their ability to identify warning signs.
- Airlines and unions will expand the use of pilot assistance programs. The FAA will support the development of these programs over the next year. These programs will be incorporated in the airline's Safety Management Systems for identifying risk.
- The FAA will work with airlines over the next year as they develop programs to reduce the stigma around mental health issues by increasing awareness and promoting resources to help resolve mental health problems.
- The FAA will issue guidance to airlines to promote best practices about pilot support programs for mental health issues.
- The FAA will ask the Aerospace Medical Association to consider addressing the issue of professional reporting responsibilities on a national basis and to present a resolution to the American Medical Association. Reporting requirements currently vary by state and by licensing and specialty boards.

"As a member of the ARC, ALPA was pleased to work with other stakeholders and share information about the many pilot assistance programs currently in place," said Capt. Joe DePete, ALPA First Vice President and National Safety Coordinator. "We are committed to maintaining the highest standards for pilot health, and this report will continue to help ensure the safety of our industry."

"This report reflects the strong collaboration among airlines, airline employees, safety organizations and government that has made the U.S. aviation system the largest and safest aviation system in the world," said Billy Nolen, A4A Senior Vice President, Safety, Security and Operations. "Airlines for America and our members appreciate the opportunity to participate on the Pilot Fitness Aviation Rulemaking Committee and will continue to work with our carriers' superb pilot workforce and all interested parties to implement the Committee's recommendations and ensure that air travel remains the safest form of transportation available."

The ARC's experts did not recommend routine psychological testing because there was no convincing evidence that it would improve safety, which the Aerospace Medical Association also concluded in a letter to Administrator Huerta in September 2015, stating that in-depth psychological testing of pilots as part of routine periodic care is neither productive nor cost effective. Instead, the FAA and the aviation community is embracing a holistic approach that includes education, outreach, training, and encourages reporting and treatment of mental health issues. The FAA will reconvene the ARC's medical working group this year to determine if specific U.S. psychological research projects should be sponsored to better understand general pilot mental health. The FAA will also collaborate with the United Kingdom's

Civil Aviation Authority which is studying the psychological testing of pilots who underwent personality testing several decades ago, to include medical and psychiatric outcomes, as well as exploring early recognition of personality and behavioral issues that could pose issues in the future for pilots.

The ARC also studied access to the flightdeck and determined that procedures and design requirements for U.S. airlines are effective.

The joint FAA and industry group known as the Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST) recommended the ARC's study based on the Malaysia Flight 370 and Germanwings Flight 9525 tragedies.

A [fact sheet](#) has additional background on the FAA's medical standards.

You are subscribed to News updates for the Federal Aviation Administration. A new Press Release is now available. We've included a copy of the release in this email.

Please do not reply to this message. See our [Contact FAA](#) page for contact information.
