



Memorandum

U.S. Department of
Transportation

Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION**: Audit Announcement –
FAA Oversight of Air Carrier Maintenance
Programs
Federal Aviation Administration
Project No. 17A3003A000

Date: June 1, 2017

From: Matthew E. Hampton
Assistant Inspector General
for Aviation Audits

Reply to
Attn. of: JA-10

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

Commercial aviation in the United States continues to be one of the safest forms of transportation in the world. This longstanding and impressive safety record is due in part to a series of overlapping safety controls developed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the airline industry to ensure air carriers maintain the highest standards when operating and maintaining their aircraft fleets. However, recent safety events and disclosures regarding potentially unsafe maintenance practices—such as allegations that mechanics have been forced to shortcut repairs to keep aircraft in service as well as a string of emergency landings and aborted takeoffs that can be traced to mechanical problems—serve to remind us that FAA oversight of maintenance programs is paramount.

In 2016, the Ranking Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Subcommittee on Aviation requested that we review the overall effectiveness of FAA's oversight of air carrier maintenance programs. The Congressmen questioned whether FAA demonstrates a sustained ability in its oversight role to account for mergers, rapid expansion, cost cutting, and other factors that could affect air carriers' decisions about maintenance. They were particularly concerned about whether corrective actions taken by air carriers actually address root causes of maintenance lapses. Accordingly, our objectives for this audit are to assess (1) FAA's oversight of air carrier maintenance programs and (2) whether FAA considers factors such as mergers, rapid expansion, or cost-cutting initiatives when adjusting its oversight of air carrier maintenance programs.

We plan to begin the audit this month and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at FAA Headquarters and selected Flight Standards District Offices and air carrier Certificate Management Offices nationwide. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-366-0500 or Tina Nysted, Program Director, at 404-562-3770.

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cc: FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-100
DOT Audit Liaison, M-1