



# Memorandum

U.S. Department of  
Transportation

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation  
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Audit Announcement –  
Review of FAA’s Implementation of a Pilot  
Records Database  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Project No. 14A3005A000

Date: February 21, 2014

From: Jeffrey B. Guzzetti  
Assistant Inspector General  
for Aviation Audits

Reply to  
Attn. of: JA-10

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

Air carriers depend on the accuracy and completeness of historical pilot performance data to determine which pilots to hire. However, as part of its accident investigations, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has raised concerns that carriers may not receive comprehensive data on pilots. For example, the captain in the 2009 Colgan accident had multiple performance problems that had not been disclosed to the air carrier. In response, NTSB recommended that air carriers develop processes to validate and retain pilot training records. Additionally, in the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Extension Act of 2010, Congress mandated that FAA create a new centralized database of FAA and air carrier pilot records that are retained for the life of a pilot, and that airlines review those records during the hiring process.<sup>1</sup>

In 2011, we reported that while FAA met the act’s initial milestone to begin developing the pilot records database, the Agency lacked an effective process to provide carriers with a comprehensive history of a pilot’s training, qualifications and proficiency.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, in January 2013, we reported that FAA had yet to make long-term implementation decisions for the database, such as how to incorporate data from different sources and transition to the new system while ensuring data integrity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pub. L. 111-216, August 1, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> *New Approaches Are Needed To Strengthen FAA Oversight of Air Carrier Training Programs and Pilot Performance* (OIG Report Number AV-2012-027), December 20, 2011. OIG reports are available on our Web site at <http://www.oig.dot.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> *FAA and Industry Are Advancing the Airline Safety Act, But Challenges Remain To Achieve Its Full Measure* (OIG Report Number AV-2013-037), January 31, 2013.

We also issued a series of recommendations to FAA regarding the database's implementation and the need to ensure air carriers have adjusted their policies to retain pilot records for the new database.

In September 2013, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Aviation Subcommittee requested that we examine FAA and industry's progress in implementing the new pilot records database as mandated by the act. Accordingly, our audit objectives are to (1) evaluate FAA's progress in developing and implementing the pilot records database, and (2) determine what pilot records are available for air carriers to obtain and review for new applicants.

Our audit will include visits to FAA Headquarters and Airman Certification Branch offices, as well as select Flight Standards Service field offices responsible for oversight of commercial airlines. We plan to begin this audit within the next few weeks and will contact your liaison to schedule an entrance conference. 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: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-100