



U.S. Department of
Transportation
Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Memorandum

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement—
Pilot Training and Regional Airlines
Project No. 09A3008A000

Date: October 23, 2009

From: Lou E. Dixon 
Assistant Inspector General
for Aviation and Special Programs

Reply to
Attn of: JA-10

To: Assistant Administrator for
Financial Services and Chief Financial Officer

Although mainline air carriers have maintained an unprecedented safety record in recent years, smaller regional air carriers have experienced a number of fatal accidents. A recent National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) hearing regarding the fatal crash of Colgan Air Flight 3407 revealed the need to closely examine the regulations governing pilot training requirements at regional airlines and the oversight necessary to ensure their compliance. This is a particular concern at regional airlines since the last six fatal large commercial air carrier accidents involved regional airlines, and the NTSB has cited pilot performance as a potential contributory factor in four of these accidents.

We are initiating a review of FAA's oversight of airline pilot training issues at the request of the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and its Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security, the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation, and Representatives Louise Slaughter, Christopher Lee, and Brian Higgins. The Members expressed concern regarding whether FAA regulations and oversight governing these issues are effective enough to assure "One Level of Safety" for both mainline and regional air carriers.

Accordingly, we plan to conduct an audit of FAA's oversight of air carrier pilot training programs for operators conducting flights under Part 121 of the Federal Aviation Regulations. Our audit objectives will be to assess: (1) FAA oversight for air carrier pilot training and proficiency programs, and (2) the

process and data FAA and air carriers use to evaluate the competence and qualifications of pilots when they are hired.

Our audit will include visits to FAA Headquarters and FAA offices responsible for oversight of Part 121 regional airlines and mainline air carriers and selected Part 121 operators. We plan to start field work on October 28, 2009, and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an initial meeting. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Tina B. Nysted, Program Director, at (404) 562-3770 or Gloria Denmark, Project Manager, at (404) 562-3786.

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cc: FAA Deputy Administrator
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