Introduction to Part 121 Air Carrier Certification

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) uses the air carrier certification process to ensure that you, the applicant, are able to design, document, implement, and audit safety critical processes that do two things:

1. Comply with regulations and safety standards.

2. Manage hazard-related risks in your operating environment.

The purpose of the certification process is to determine whether an applicant is able to conduct business in a manner that complies with all applicable regulations and safety standards and allows you to manage the hazard-related risks in your operating systems and environment. The process is designed to preclude the certification of applicants who are unwilling or unable to comply with regulations or to conform to safe operating practices.

The Certification Process Document (CPD) located in Order 8900.1 Volume 10, Chapter 6 Section 2 describes the processes that both you and the FAA must undergo to assure that you comply with all certification and operational requirements before receiving an operating certificate (or Operations Specifications). The FAA initial certification process assures that your processes, programs, systems, and intended methods of compliance are thoroughly reviewed, evaluated, and tested. Once completed, the certification process provides confidence that your infrastructure (programs, methods, and systems) results in continued compliance and provides you with the ability to manage hazard related risks in your operating systems and environment.

No air carrier certification applicant will be certificated until the certificate-holding district office (CHDO), regional Flight Standards Division (RFSD) offices, and AFS-900 are confident that the prospective certificate holder is able to provide service at the highest degree of safety in the public interest. This website explains in detail the certification process.

As seen in the regulations and policies listed below, safety is both a priority and a legal responsibility of the FAA. The FAA receives its authority from:

- Title 49 United States Code (USC), Section 44702, Issuance of Certificates states "When issuing a certificate under this part, the Administrator shall consider the duty of an air carrier to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest . . . "

- Title 49 USC, Section 44705, Air Carrier Operating Certificates, states "The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall issue an air carrier operating certificate to a person desiring to operate as an air carrier when the Administrator finds, after investigation, that the person properly and adequately is equipped and able to operate safely under this part and regulations and standards prescribed under this part."

- FAA regulations and policy: The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), with which you will be expected to comply, includes Title 14 CFR, Aeronautics and Space, and Title 49 CFR, Hazardous Materials.

In order to assure that the policies listed above are followed, the FAA:

- Verifies that you are capable of operating safely and that you comply with the regulations and standards prescribed by the Administrator before issuing an air carrier operating certificate and before approving or accepting air carrier programs.

- Conducts periodic reviews to re-verify that your organization continues to meet regulatory requirements when environmental changes occur.

- Continually validates the performance of your organization's approved and accepted programs.

Refer to the FAA Order 8900.1 Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS), Volume 10, Chapter 1, Section 1 for additional information.