PAUL CIANCIOLO

Navigating the Medical Flight Path

The path to getting an Airman Medical Certificate can get complicated when one doesn't meet the medical standards set by 14 CFR part 67. However, not meeting those standards does not preclude one from flying. The FAA makes exceptions every day as long as the applicant can prove that they can perform the duties required without endangering public safety.

With more than 400,000 applications received and processed every year for medical certificates by the FAA Civil Aerospace Medical Institute, only 0.1 percent end up denied.

The first step to get a medical certificate is through MedXPress.faa.gov, which every airman has access to. The airman then takes the confirmation number received from MedXPress and gives that to an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME).

The AME is the FAA's authorized designee from the private medical community. The AME will then perform the rest of the examination.

Follow the blue "airway" to the right to find your flight path to either a first, second, or third class medical certificate. Follow the magenta "airway" for the non-medical sport pilot option.

Sport Pilot Only: No Medical Option

MedXPress

3,400
Approximate Number of AMEs

AME Denial or Deferral

AME Approval

Sport

A Sport Pilot is either required to hold a valid medical certificate or current U.S. driver's license. If using a driver's license, the pilot must not have been denied any class of medical certificate, not have had the most recent medical revoked, and not have had an Authorization withdrawn.

Student

An AME *may* issue a Student Pilot Certificate, which is required to solo, along with a valid medical if the applicant is at least age 16 and adequately fluent in English. Student certificates without AME clearance may also be issued by a flight examiner or local FAA FSDO.

3rd Class Medical

This class medical certificate is required to exercise the privileges of a Private Pilot, Recreational Pilot, Student Pilot, or Certified Flight Instructor. The vision standards are more liberal for this class than those required for second or first class medical certificates.

FAA

An airman who is medically disqualified for any reason may appeal in writing and may be considered for either a **SODA** (left) or **Authorization** for a Special Issuance (below) under the authority of the Federal Air Surgeon. An AME may always defer an application to the FAA for action.

NTSB

An appeal may be made within 60 days after a final FAA denial of an unrestricted medical certificate. NTSB does not have jurisdiction to review the denial of a SODA or Authorization. A formal hearing may be held.

NTSB Approval

2nd Class Medical

This class medical certificate is required to exercise the privileges of a Commercial Pilot, Flight Engineer, Flight Navigator, or Air Traffic Control Tower Specialist (contract or FAA).

SODA

A Statement of Demonstrated Ability may be granted when a qualifying condition is **static or non-progressive**, and the applicant is found capable of performing duties without endangering public safety. The SODA is issued through a Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) after successful completion of a practical test. It does not expire and authorizes an AME to issue a medical certificate for a specific class if the condition has not adversely changed.

SODA Approval

"Special Issuance" Approval

1st Class Medical

This class medical certificate is required to exercise the privileges of an Airline Transport Pilot. An electrocardiogram is required at age 35 and annually after age 40, which is not required for second and third class medicals. Only designated senior AMEs may perform examinations for first class medical certificates.

Authorization

An Authorization for a Special Issuance of a Medical Certificate is for a **specified period of time** for a specific condition. It may be granted if the duties authorized by the class of medical certificate applied for can be performed without endangering public safety. Additional medical information above and beyond that usually asked for may be required. Operational limitations may also be set.