



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

James L. Oberstar
Chairman

John L. Mica
Ranking Republican Member

May 18, 2010

David Heymsfeld, Chief of Staff
Ward W. McCarragher, Chief Counsel

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of Staff

The Honorable Calvin Scovel III
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
West Building W70-300
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Inspector General Scovel:

As your office has previously reported, the use of repair stations by U.S. airlines has risen dramatically in the last several years. Major airlines that outsource their maintenance send about 70 percent of their heavy airframe maintenance checks to repair stations, up from only 34 percent in 2003. In addition, since 1994 the number of Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA)-certificated repair stations located in foreign countries has increased significantly from about 340 to well over 700.

At the request of this Subcommittee, your office has performed valuable reviews of the FAA oversight of repair stations. You reported in 2003 and again in 2008 that FAA's oversight is not robust enough to ensure that outsourced repairs meet FAA standards, and you made important recommendations aimed at improving this oversight. In response to your concerns, FAA implemented a risk-based system for repair station oversight in 2007. In March 2007, you stated in testimony before the Aviation Subcommittee that FAA's efforts were a step in the right direction, but it was still too soon to determine the effectiveness of the new system. You also recently reported that FAA had not completed actions on many of the other recommendations you made for improving repair station oversight.

We continue to be concerned that repair stations are not receiving adequate FAA oversight. Therefore, we are asking your office to: (1) examine the changes FAA has made to its repair station oversight in response to your recommendations, (2) assess the effectiveness of these changes in bolstering FAA's oversight of both domestic and foreign repair stations, and (3) identify any additional challenges that still need to be addressed.

I appreciate your assistance on this important matter. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Jana Denning, Democratic Senior Professional Staff, Subcommittee on Aviation, at (202) 225-9161.

Sincerely,

Jerry F. Costello
Chairman

Subcommittee on Aviation