



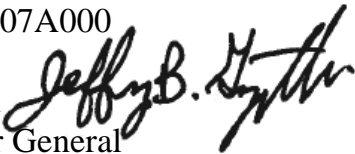
Memorandum

U.S. Department of
Transportation

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Audit Announcement -
FAA's Aviation Safety
Inspector and Analyst Staffing
Federal Aviation Administration
Project No. 11A3007A000

Date: April 7, 2011

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

Reply to
Attn. of: JA-10

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation

The United States has the world's safest air transportation system. To help maintain safety and ensure air carriers comply with aviation safety regulations, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employs more than 4,000 Aviation Safety Inspectors (ASI). These inspectors are supported by about 30 FAA Operations Research Analysts (ORA) who analyze air carrier and inspection data to identify risk areas. Although FAA oversight was not cited as a causal factor in the 2009 fatal accident of Colgan Air flight 3407, the tragedy underscored the need for constant vigilance over aviation safety.

In the Colgan accident investigation report, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) concluded that commercial (i.e., Part 121¹) carriers that experience rapid growth, increased complexity of operations, or increased accidents or incidents warrant more stringent FAA oversight. Congress also recognized this need in the Airline Safety and FAA Extension Act of 2010, which includes a requirement that our office review ASIs and ORAs at Part 121 air carriers.²

Accordingly, our audit objectives are to (1) evaluate FAA's process for assigning ASIs and ORAs to each Part 121 air carrier, (2) assess the number and level of experience of ASIs and ORAs assigned to each Part 121 air carrier, and (3) evaluate FAA's use of other surveillance processes to supplement the inspections performed by assigned oversight offices.

¹ 14 CFR 121 Operating Requirements: Domestic, Flag, and Supplemental Operations. This FAA regulation governs commercial air carriers, including regional air carriers, with primarily scheduled flights.

² Public Law 111-216 enacted August 1, 2010. Section 205 of the Act specifies the need for our office to conduct a review.

Our audit will include visits to FAA Headquarters, the FAA offices responsible for oversight of Part 121 air carriers, and selected air carriers. We plan to begin the audit the week of April 18, 2011. We will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-366-0500 or Robin Koch, Program Director, (404) 562-3776.

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cc: Anthony Williams, AAE-001
Martin Gertel, M-1