Special Rule Issued by FAA Extends Medical Certificates, Flight Reviews and Other Privileges Through June 30

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, NAAA has been in near-daily contact with the FAA regarding the many regulatory hurdles that are nearly impossible to comply with during the pandemic. In response to this, the FAA yesterday released a Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) addressing many of these concerns. The following exemptions will be valid upon the rule’s publication in the Federal Register.

Medical Certificates

The FAA extended the validity periods of medical certificates expiring between March 31 and May 31 through June 30. This is an important distinction between the FAA’s previous decision to simply suspend enforcement actions against expired medical certificates, which could have potentially caused insurance complications.

Flight Reviews

The FAA is offering a three-calendar-month “grace period” for those whose flight review expire between March 1 and June 30. However, there are two conditions to be eligible for this extension:

- The pilot must have logged at least 10 hours of pilot in command time (PIC) within the 12 calendar months preceding the month the flight review was due, in an aircraft for which that pilot is rated.
- Eligible pilots must complete FAA Safety Team online courses totaling at least three Wings credits. The courses must have been completed in January or later to meet this requirement, according to the rule.
- For Robinson R-22 and R-44 pilots, the 10 hours of PIC time noted above must be in an R-22 or R-44, provided the pilot has at least 200 hours of helicopter time with at least 50 hours in an applicable Robinson helicopter.
- R-22 or R-44 pilots with less than the above level of experience may extend their flight review an additional three months provided that of their 10 hours of PIC time in an R-22 or R-44, 3 hours has occurred in the 3 calendar months preceding the month the flight review was due, and they complete a minimum of three hours of self-study that includes specific subjects as denoted in the SFAR.

Knowledge Tests

Applicants whose knowledge tests expire between March and June will have their knowledge tests’ validity extended by three months.
Flight Instructors

Unlike pilot certificates, flight instructor certificates expire every two years. The FAA will extend the validity of flight instructor certificates that expired between March 31 and May 31 until June 30.

Inspection Authorization

Airframe and powerplant mechanics with inspection authorization who were not able to meet the first year renewal requirements by March have until June 30 to complete one of the listed activities to meet the first year renewal requirements.

NAAA had previously joined a letter with general aviation industry partners asking the FAA to temporarily allow exemptions and deviations from certain FARs to ensure the continuity of operations and commerce during the pandemic.

As a result, the FAA justified the need for the SFAR writing, in part, “… the associations stressed the importance of general aviation operations for lifesaving air medical missions, the movement of essential personnel and medical equipment, aerial applications for crops, forestry treatments, firefighting, and eradication of mosquitoes and other disease-carrying pests.”

You can get the very latest policy guidance on the COVID-19 pandemic important to agricultural aviators at agaviation.org/covidresources