



## FAA Announces Changes to Sleep Apnea Policy

The Federal Aviation Administration's Federal Air Surgeon (FAS) recently informed ALPA of its intentions to implement new guidance regarding obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). This guidance is to be published for the use of Aviation Medical Examiners (AMEs) on March 2, 2015. This new guidance addresses ALPA's concerns with the agency's proposed guidance that was released in late 2013 which would have put airline pilot medical certificates at risk for any pilot suspected of having or diagnosed with OSA based on a single criterion. The guidance instructs AME's to consider multiple factors when requesting further evaluation with regard to OSA, and the AME will not withhold medical certification of the airman.

### BACKGROUND

In December 2013 the FAA published a controversial proposed policy that would have required pilots with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or more to be evaluated by a physician who is a board certified sleep specialist. Anyone diagnosed with OSA would have to be treated before they could be medically certificated. ALPA promptly notified the FAA of multiple concerns with this proposed guidance, which included:

- There was insufficient opportunity given to pilots to remedy OSA before the AME was required to take the significant step of denying the medical certificate
- The diagnosis and treatment of sleep apnea can cost thousands of dollars. Insurance coverage varies, sometimes leaving pilots on the hook for most, if not all, expenses.
- The agency developed this potentially career-ending policy without adequate opportunity for stakeholder input.

Since then, ALPA has been working with the FAA and other affected stakeholders. ALPA has remained in contact with the FAA Federal Air Surgeon's office on this issue and continued to advocate for changes that would improve safety and health of the airman, while protecting pilots' livelihoods.

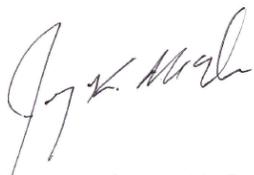
### NEW GUIDANCE

ALPA supports the FAA's recent release of the new guidance on OSA. Following is a comparison of the most troublesome provisions in the original proposal with those provisions as modified in the final guidance:

ORIGINAL PROPOSAL	FINAL GUIDANCE
Created a single-trigger requirement for treatment for anyone with a BMI of 40 or more	The single-trigger was eliminated and replaced by integrated assessment of history, symptoms, and clinical findings
Required examination by board-certified sleep specialist	Permits examination by any licensed physician of the airman's choice, including an (AME)
Required an expensive sleep study	Physician can determine with input from the airman the need for and type of sleep study
Denied a regular medical certificate based on evidence of OSA. Grounded pilot for extended period awaiting diagnosis, treatment, compliance documentation, FAA paperwork.	Medical certificate is issued and pilot continues to fly while OSA situation is assessed and treated. Pilot given 90 days for this process and a 30-day extension upon request, as needed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Note that your AME should have the new FAA guidance on OSA and incorporate it into his or her airman medical examinations on March 2, 2015. Please provide any feedback to your MEC Aeromedical Chair and to the Engineering & Air Safety Department at [EAS@alpa.org](mailto:EAS@alpa.org), 1-800-424-2470.



Captain Jerry McDermott  
Pilot Assistance Chairman

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