

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

3.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter describes:

- A. How the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) gives pilots flight authority,
- B. The requirements pilots must meet to retain flight authority, and
- C. The training we require for people other than pilots who are involved in aviation operations or managing employees involved in aviation operations.

3.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter applies to all Service employees, volunteers, Youth Conservation Corps members and students, and seasonal workers who use, operate, or maintain Service aviation resources.

3.3 What are the authorities for this chapter?

- A. Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR Part 91).
- B. Office of Management and Budget Circular, A-126, Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft.
- C. Departmental Manual (DM), Parts 350 through 354.

3.4 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter?

A. Flight Authority. Flight authority is permission given by the Director that allows employees to pilot aircraft while doing Service business.

B. Instrument Flight Rules. Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) are when a pilot operates an aircraft primarily by referencing the aircraft's instruments.

C. Special Use Activities. Special use activities are aviation operations that require special equipment, techniques, or skills. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Low level wildlife surveys within 500' above ground level,
- (2) Aerial ignition,
- (3) Animal radio tracking,
- (4) Law Enforcement reconnaissance flights,
- (5) Mountain flying, and
- (6) Wheel/ski/floats operations on unprepared landing areas (airplane) that are not regularly used.

D. Visual Flight Rules. Visual Flight Rules (VFR) are when a pilot operates an aircraft primarily by reference to outside surroundings.

3.5 Who is responsible for flight authority and aviation-related training?

- A. The **Director** grants flight authority to pilots.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

B. The Assistant Director – Migratory Birds is the Service Aviation Executive and is responsible for:

- (1) Advising the Director on Service aviation matters, and
- (2) Ensuring that employees in his/her area of responsibility who are involved in aviation operations receive required training.

C. The Chief – Law Enforcement is responsible for ensuring that Law Enforcement employees involved in aviation receive required training.

D. Regional Directors:

- (1) Ensure that all Regional employees involved in aviation operations receive required training.
- (2) Coordinate with specialty components within the Region, such as the Assistant Regional Director, Migratory Bird Management and State Programs and the Special Agent in Charge, Office of Law Enforcement, to ensure these programs are included in the Region's aviation management structure and the employees involved receive appropriate aviation operations training.

E. The Service Aviation Manager:

- (1) Serves as the primary Service contact and coordinator with the Associate Director, Department of the Interior National Business Center Aviation Management (NBC AM) for all aviation training requirements.
- (2) Revises and updates this chapter, as necessary.
- (3) Interprets the NBC AM training requirements and serves as a consultant to resolve Servicewide questions or issues.
- (4) Coordinates requests for flight authority.

F. Regional Aviation Managers (RAM):

- (1) Develop a yearly training program to ensure Regional pilots and air crews are mission flight proficient and know Service aviation policies.
- (2) Coordinate with each pilot in the Region to determine training needs.
- (3) Document new pilot familiarization and special use activities training.
- (4) Coordinate and provide training for managers, Project Leaders, field staff, and pilots to make sure they know:
 - (a) Current aviation policies, procedures, and regulations;
 - (b) Field mission requirements; and
 - (c) Elements of flight safety.

G. Project Leaders/Refuge Managers review mission profiles to ensure that pilots and observers are adequately trained to accomplish proposed missions safely and efficiently.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

3.6 How does a pilot get flight authority to fly for the Service?

A. To get the Director's approval, the Regional Director sends a request for flight authority (see Exhibit 1) through the Service Aviation Manager to the Director. Requests for flight authority must include the following information:

(1) Clearly state the justification for granting the person flight authority. (For example, a person requests to use his/her personal aircraft for transportation while on Service business instead of using a privately owned or rented car.)

(2) A copy of the person's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) pilot and medical certificates. All Service pilots must have a minimum of an FAA Class II medical certificate. They must renew their medical certificates every year.

(3) A "Record of Aeronautical Experience" (Flight Experience), substantiated by logbook entries, showing that the person meets Departmental requirements for pilot experience.

B. The Service Aviation Manager recommends or declines to recommend approval of the request and sends the original request and his/her recommendation to the Director.

C. After receiving flight authority, a pilot must satisfactorily complete an initial flight check given by an NBC AM designated pilot inspector and all training requirements before he/she can serve as a Pilot-in-Command (PIC).

3.7 How does a pilot enter the Pilot Training Program? The pilot must first meet the Office of Personnel Management's basic aircraft pilot requirements, participate in the Service's Career Intern Program, or meet the requirements in Operational Procedures Memorandum (OPM) 22, Appendix B.

A. The RAM must send a request to the Regional Director to put a pilot into our training program. If it is a new pilot, then he/she must have flight authority (see section 3.5) before taking any Departmental aviation training.

B. The Regional Director may send the request to the Service Aviation Manager for review.

C. The Service Aviation Manager, coordinating with the RAM and NBC AM, develops a detailed, personalized training plan for the pilot, including any requests for exemptions from requirements. The Service Aviation Manager sends the training plan and any exemption requests to NBC AM for approval. The personalized training plan must include, but is not limited to, the following:

(1) The pilot's present level of experience, the level of expected proficiency when the training is completed, and a description of the missions he/she will be qualified to perform.

(2) The name of the Service flight instructor assigned to mentor and instruct the trainee and who will report training progress to the Service Aviation Manager. The Service has a mentor program that helps pilots and biologist/pilots develop their experience before they become PICs.

(3) The limitations and restrictions imposed on the trainee during training; for example, whether the trainee can fly solo or as the PIC on supervised missions.

(4) When the pilot will get flight training progress checks, if any, and what experience levels he/she must meet prior to the NBC AM flight checks.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

3.8 How does the Service document flight training? We use the Flight Instruction Form (FWS Form 3-2353) to document training a pilot receives from a Service flight instructor. The pilot must send a copy of the form to the NBC AM Area Office, Fleet Management Specialist. The Fleet Management Specialist puts the form in the individual's NBC AM training file.

3.9 What familiarization training must a newly appointed Service pilot complete?

A. All newly appointed Service pilots must satisfactorily complete a minimum of 10 hours of familiarization training before they may fly as a PIC on Service missions.

B. An active Service pilot who is a certified flight instructor (or in Alaska, an NBC AM instructor pilot) must conduct the familiarization training and note the pilot's progress on the Flight Instruction Form (FWS Form 3-2353).

C. The trainee must fly at least two Service missions under supervision of a current and qualified Service pilot before flying a Service mission without supervision. One of the supervised Service missions can count as part of the required flight familiarization training described in section 3.9A.

D. In addition to the flight portion of the training, the pilot must demonstrate familiarity with the Service's and Region's published Aviation Management Program policies, procedures, and regulations.

3.10 What training and proficiency requirements must a Service pilot meet to remain current?

A. You maintain proficiency as a Service pilot by:

(1) Flying at least 6 hours as the PIC in the previous 90 days. This flight time must include three takeoffs and landings in the type of aircraft you will use in your Service mission operations (full stop landings for tail wheel aircraft),

(2) Flying a minimum of 50 hours each year. Private flying time may count toward currency when it is in the same category and class of aircraft that you fly for the Service, and

(3) Getting a VFR flight check annually. If possible, the flight check should be completed in the pilot's birth month.

B. In the following circumstances, pilots must get specialized flight checks:

(1) If you fly special use flights, you must get a special use flight check once every 2 years (see section 3.4C), and

(2) If your flight responsibilities include Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IFR) operations, you must maintain IFR currency as required by [14 CFR Part 61](#) and successfully complete an IFR flight check every 6 months.

C. You must notify the NBC AM, Area Fleet Management Specialist, if you get any flight checks from an agency other than NBC AM (such as FAA) and have the results of that flight check put in your training file.

3.11 What happens if a pilot fails to meet the annual minimum flight currency requirement?

A. If you fail to meet the 6 hours flight time in 90 days, you will be limited to solo general use training flights without passengers or air crew members.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

B. If you fail to fly the minimum 50 hours per year, you must send written justification, through your supervisor to the Regional Director, appropriate Assistant Director, or Chief – Law Enforcement explaining why he/she should allow you to continue to fly. Only with his/her written approval may you continue to fly on Service business.

C. If you do not fly for 4 consecutive months, you must fly a minimum of 2 hours with a current mission-qualified Service pilot or an NBC AM designated inspector pilot before you can fly on Service business.

3.12 Are there special training requirements for flying low level operations? Yes, a pilot must meet the minimum pilot qualifications and any applicable special use qualifications described in 351 DM 3. You must also meet the following Service-specific requirements:

A. Have 200 PIC low level operations flying hours in the category of aircraft being flown, **or**

B. Have 20 hours of low level flight instruction with a certified flight instructor in the category of aircraft being flown, and while using the low level flight training plan (see Exhibit 2).

C. An NBC AM pilot inspector will give you a flight check when you have completed the low level flight training. After that, you must receive a low level flight check every 2 years to remain current.

3.13 Are there any other flight checks that a pilot might have to get? You may need to get a special flight check in one of the following circumstances:

A. Configuration Change Flight Check. You must get a flight check whenever aircraft configuration changes are made for you to operate on water, snow, or off-airport area (e.g., tundra) because it requires special skills and knowledge.

B. Post-Accident Flight Check. If you are involved in an accident or an incident that may have resulted in material damage, you must successfully complete an NBC AM flight check before flying another Service mission.

C. Interim Flight Check. You may get an interim flight check from NBC AM at any time as a quality assurance evaluation.

3.14 Do Service pilots have to take training other than flight training? Yes. Pilots must:

A. Attend an Aviation Centered Education (ACE) training session during the first 12 months of employment with the Service (NBC AM publishes the date and location of upcoming ACE sessions on the NBC AM Web site);

B. Complete recurrent training by attending an ACE session, by taking online aviation-centered training every 3 years, or by taking equivalent training at an AMD Alaska pilot ground school; and

C. Accumulate 30 hours of aviation-related training every 2 years.

3.15 Are there training requirements for Service pilots who move to a new location or who are going to fly a different type of aircraft? Yes. Pilots must ride as a crew member or receive appropriate orientation training, or both, before they can fly as a PIC when they:

A. Transfer to a new facility, geographic area, or activity; or

B. Change aircraft or equipment.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

3.16 Can the Service suspend or terminate a pilot’s flight authority?

A. A pilot’s supervisor may temporarily suspend the pilot’s flight authority for up to 72 hours, pending further investigation of:

- (1) An aviation incident or accident,
- (2) Violation of a rule or regulation, or
- (3) For other safety-related issues.

B. The Regional Director or the appropriate Assistant Director must approve suspensions that will be longer than 72 hours.

C. The rules for termination or suspension of flight authority are listed in 351 DM 3.

D. Pilots who are permanently or indefinitely suspended or terminated must return all equipment purchased with Service funds to the Service.

3.17 Are there special training requirements for other people who are involved in aviation-related activities on Service aircraft? Yes, Table 3-1 describes the training requirements for people other than pilots when they are involved in aviation-related operations.

Table 3-1: Training Requirements for People Other than Pilots		
Personnel	Description of Training Requirements	Refresher Training Requirements
A. Passengers and air crew members who fly on Government aircraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take Basic Helicopter/Airplane Safety Training (B-3) offered by NBC AM ACE, the RAM, or from another qualified aviation safety instructor (see section 3.18 for exceptions). May take B-3 training online through the Interagency Aviation Training Web site. Course schedules available on the NBC AM Web site and the Interagency Aviation Training Web site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take refresher every 3 years. Refresher offered on the Interagency Aviation Training Web site. Refresher must include modules on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A-101 Aviation Safety, - A-104 Aircraft Capabilities & Limitations, - A-105 Aviation Life Support Equipment, - A-106 Aviation Mishap Reporting, - A-108 Pre-Flight Checklist and Briefing/Debriefing, and - A-113 Crash Survival.
B. Flight crew members and other employees who fly in float planes or fly over water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take Water Ditch and Survival Training Training offered by NBC AM ACE or contact your RAM for similar training at other locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AVIATION**

Table 3-1: Training Requirements for People Other than Pilots

Personnel	Description of Training Requirements	Refresher Training Requirements
C. Line managers (Regional Directors, Assistant Regional Directors, and other managers responsible and accountable for using aviation resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take the M-2 Aviation Program Overview/Line Managers or M-3 Aviation Management Training for Supervisors course offered at a NBC AM ACE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take course every 3 years to remain current.
D. Supervisors whose employees use aircraft to perform Service business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take the M-3 Aviation Management Training for Supervisors course when they first become supervisors of employees using Service aircraft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take course every 3 years to remain current.
E. Contracting Officer's Representatives (COR) involved in aviation-related contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take the M-4 Aircraft Contract Administration course offered by NBC AM ACE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must take 8 hours of training every 3 years to remain current.

3.18 Can passengers fly on a Service aircraft if they have not taken the B-3 training?

A. If a passenger must fly on short notice or flies on a Service aircraft infrequently (not more than twice a year), he/she may fly without taking B-3 training. Examples of such passengers include a Regional Director conducting an observation, reconnaissance, or orientation flight; an employee from another Government agency who is observing an operation; or a member of Congress who needs to fly on Service aircraft. (See 330 FW 2 for information about who may travel on Service aircraft.) Service employees may take the initial B-3 online.

B. The Service pilot or other Service employee who has aviation training must give such passengers a briefing on aviation safety prior to the flight.

C. The passengers must wear any required personal protective equipment.

3.19 What other aviation-related training is available for people involved in aviation operations?

NBC AM developed the Interagency Aviation Training Web site to offer many training modules on specific aviation-related subjects. The NBC AM Web site also describes the Interior Aviation User Training Program and includes a detailed description of the training requirements for people who are involved with aviation operations.

3.20 Where are Interagency Aviation Training (IAT) records stored and how do trainees access them? Training records for IAT Web-based training, the ACE training sessions, and other classes offered by NBC AM and Interagency Aviation trainers are stored on NBC AM's IAT Web site.

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