

Rule Would Limit EU Flight Crews' Duty Hours

Proposed by the European Air Safety Agency for adoption in April 2012, the rule is similar to FAA's September 2010 proposed reduction of duty hours. Comments on the EASA rule are due by March 20.

European air safety authorities have moved to limit commercial pilots' and flight crews' on-duty and flying hours, effectively matching the September 2010 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking from the Federal Aviation Administration. The European Air Safety Agency's Notice of Proposed Amendment No. 2010-14A would harmonize differing regulations across the continent if adopted as intended by the European Parliament and European Council in April 2012. Comments on it are due by March 20.

Those two entities had asked EASA, which is based in Cologne, Germany, to conduct a scientific and medical evaluation of the current regulations and then propose a set of fully harmonized rules. A rulemaking group including national aviation authorities, airlines, and pilot and cabin crew representatives then went to work.

The proposed rule would apply to commercial aviation but not to air taxis, emergency medical service air operations, or single-pilot operations.

The Air Line Pilots Association's Jan. 7 e-newsletter, FastRead, said the EASA proposal would prohibit airlines from scheduling pilots to be on duty for longer than 14 hours in a day, with overnight duty periods limited to 12 hours. "While many of the provisions are similar to the FAA NPRM, the EASA proposal has some shortcomings that the European Cockpit Association will be commenting on," ALPA stated.

FAA's NRPM would create one rule for domestic and international flights with increased rest requirements, weekly and 28-day cumulative fatigue limits, and 30 consecutive hours of off-duty time every week. According to EASA's analysis, its proposal is more protective when crews are reporting between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. and more protective in terms of weekly rest (36 hours including two local nights, versus 30 hours). EASA's rule prescribes rest as a function of the preceding duty period, but FAA's defines only a standard sleep opportunity of nine hours, according to the analysis.

EASA's rule would limit a crew member's assigned total duty period to no more than 60 duty hours in any consecutive seven days and no more than 190 duty hours in any 28 consecutive days. Total flight time of the flights on which an individual crew member could be assigned as an operating crew member could not exceed:

- 100 flight hours in any 28 consecutive days
- 900 flight hours in any calendar year
- 1,000 flight hours in any 12 consecutive calendar months

<http://ohsonline.com/>