



NTSB 2017-2018 MOST WANTED LIST OF TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Require Medical Fitness



AVIATION

MWL
MOST WANTED LIST



It is essential that pilots recognize when they are not fit to fly and remove themselves from the schedule until they are healthy.

What is the issue?

Safety-critical personnel, such as commercial pilots, with poorly managed medical conditions or who are taking impairing medications while operating a plane endanger the traveling public. Requiring proper screening for medical fitness for duty can identify potentially impairing conditions and prevent the accidents that lead to these and other tragic outcomes.

In July 2002, a FedEx Boeing 727 flew into the ground while approaching the Tallahassee, Florida, airport. The flying pilot had a severe color vision deficiency that made it difficult for him to correctly identify the color of the airport's precision approach path indicator lights, which were warning that the airplane was too low.

Medical conditions and treatments that may impair transportation professionals should be identified and appropriately managed to mitigate transportation safety hazards. In addition, although it has long been known that untreated and undiagnosed medical conditions pose a safety risk to the traveling public, medical certification requirements for safety-critical personnel vary across transportation modes.



The aviation medical certification is the most comprehensive fitness evaluation system, but a certificate does not give a pilot a free pass for the duration of the certificate. It is incumbent upon pilots to recognize when they are not fit to fly and remove themselves from the schedule until they are healthy. Additionally, pilots are increasingly testing positive for over-the-counter (OTC) sedating medications. It is essential that pilots understand the effects of OTC medications and, for those medications with sedating or impairing side effect, follow Federal Aviation Administration guidance or talk with their medical professionals to determine when they are medically fit to return to flying.

What can be done?

Operating complex machines requires the full cognitive and physical capabilities of the operators, maintenance personnel, and others performing safety-critical functions. Ensuring these individuals comply

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with requirements to report to work medically fit for duty is essential.

We have made recommendations for a comprehensive medical certification system for safety critical transportation personnel that includes these features:

- the applicant's complete medical history, taken at prescribed intervals, that includes medications, conditions, and treatments as well as a physical examination;
- specific historical questions and physical examination procedures to identify applicants at high risk for sleep disorders;
- identification of specific conditions, treatments, and medications that initially disqualify applicants for duty, with certification contingent on further testing (specific to each condition);
- explicit and uniform processes and criteria for determining when the applicant has a treated, but otherwise disqualifying, condition;
- certificates that are good only for a limited time for applicants with conditions that are currently stable but known to be likely to deteriorate, to ensure appropriate retesting;
- medical examiners who:
 - are licensed or registered to perform examinations and prescribe medication in a given state;
 - are specifically trained and certified to perform medical certification exams; and
 - have ready access to information regarding disqualifying conditions that require further evaluation.
- a review system for medical examiners' work products with both the information and capacity to identify and correct errors and substandard performance;
- the capacity to prevent applicants who have been deferred or denied certification from finding another provider who will certify them;
- a process for dealing with conditions that could impair safety and are diagnosed between certification exams; and
- guidance for medical providers that should be used when the provider believes a medical condition disqualifies an individual for duty.

The goal is simple: **ensure safety-critical professionals are medically fit for duty before they operate a vehicle.** ■

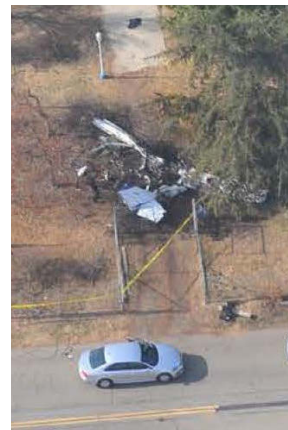
The NTSB Most Wanted List highlights safety issues identified from the NTSB's accident investigations to increase awareness about the issues and promote recommended safety solutions.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation – railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the federal government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

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Related Accidents*

Date	Location	Accident ID
September 17, 2011	Martinsburg, WV	ERA11FA495
December 26, 2013	Fresno, CA	WPR14FA078

*For detailed accident reports visit www.nts.gov

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Critical changes needed to reduce transportation accidents and save lives.

