

SUBPART III -- SAFETY

CHAPTER 441 -- REGISTRATION AND RECORDATION OF AIRCRAFT

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Sec. 44101. Operation of aircraft

(a) Registration Requirement. -- Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, a person may operate an aircraft only when the aircraft is registered under section 44103 of this title.

(b) Exceptions. -- A person may operate an aircraft in the United States that is not registered --

(1) when authorized under section 40103(d) or 41703 of this title;

(2) when it is an aircraft of the national defense forces of the United States and is identified in a way satisfactory to the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration; and

(3) for a reasonable period of time after a transfer of ownership, under regulations prescribed by the Administrator.

Sec. 44102. Registration requirements

(a) Eligibility. -- An aircraft may be registered under section 44103 of this title only when the aircraft is --

(1) not registered under the laws of a foreign country and is owned by --

(A) a citizen of the United States;

(B) an individual citizen of a foreign country lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States; or

(C) a corporation not a citizen of the United States when the corporation is organized and doing business under the laws of the United States or a State, and the aircraft is based and primarily used in the United States; or

(2) an aircraft of --

(A) the United States Government; or

(B) a State, the District of Columbia, a territory

or possession of the United States, or a political subdivision of a State, territory, or possession.

(b) Duty To Define Certain Term. -- In carrying out subsection (a)(1)(C) of this section, the Secretary of Transportation shall define "based and primarily used in the United States".

Sec. 44103. Registration of aircraft

(a) General. -- (1) On application of the owner of an aircraft that meets the requirements of section 44102 of this title, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall --

- (A) register the aircraft; and
- (B) issue a certificate of registration to its owner.

(2) The Administrator may prescribe the extent to which an aircraft owned by the holder of a dealer's certificate of registration issued under section 44104(2) of this title also is registered under this section.

(b) Controlled Substance Violations. -- (1) The Administrator may not issue an owner's certificate of registration under subsection (a)(1) of this section to a person whose certificate is revoked under section 44106 of this title during the 5-year period beginning on the date of the revocation, except --

(A) as provided in section 44106(e)(2) of this title;

or

(B) that the Administrator may issue the certificate to the person after the one-year period beginning on the date of the revocation if the Administrator decides that the aircraft otherwise meets the requirements of section 44102 of this title and that denial of a certificate for the 5-year period --

(i) would be excessive considering the nature of the offense or the act committed and the burden the denial places on the person; or

(ii) would not be in the public interest.

(2) A decision of the Administrator under paragraph (1)(B)(i) or (ii) of this subsection is within the discretion of the Administrator. That decision or failure to make a decision is not subject to administrative or judicial review.

(c) Certificates as Evidence. -- A certificate of registration issued under this section is --

(1) conclusive evidence of the nationality of an aircraft for international purposes, but not conclusive evidence in a proceeding under the laws of the United States; and

(2) not evidence of ownership of an aircraft in a proceeding in which ownership is or may be in issue.

(d) Certificates Available for Inspection. -- An operator of an aircraft shall make available for inspection a certificate of registration for the aircraft when requested by a United States Government, State, or local law enforcement officer.

Sec. 44104. Registration of aircraft components and dealers' certificates of registration

The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration

may prescribe regulations --

(1) in the interest of safety for registering and identifying an aircraft engine, propeller, or appliance; and

(2) in the public interest for issuing, suspending, and revoking a dealer's certificate of registration under this chapter and for its use by a person manufacturing, distributing, or selling aircraft.

Sec. 44105. Suspension and revocation of aircraft certificates

The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration may suspend or revoke a certificate of registration issued under section 44103 of this title when the aircraft no longer meets the requirements of section 44102 of this title.

Sec. 44106. Revocation of aircraft certificates for controlled substance violations

(a) Definition. -- In this section, "controlled substance" has the same meaning given that term in section 102 of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 (21 U.S.C. 802).

(b) Revocations. -- (1) The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall issue an order revoking the certificate of registration for an aircraft issued to an owner under section 44103 of this title and any other certificate of registration that the owner of the aircraft holds under section 44103, if the Administrator finds that --

(A) the aircraft was used to carry out, or facilitate, an activity that is punishable by death or imprisonment for more than one year under a law of the United States or a State related to a controlled substance (except a law related to simple possession of a controlled substance); and

(B) the owner of the aircraft permitted the use of the aircraft knowing that the aircraft was to be used for the activity described in clause (A) of this paragraph.

(2) An aircraft owner that is not an individual is deemed to have permitted the use of the aircraft knowing that the aircraft was to be used for the activity described in paragraph (1)(A) of this subsection only if a majority of the individuals who control the owner of the aircraft or who are involved in forming the major policy of the owner permitted the use of the aircraft knowing that the aircraft was to be used for the activity described in paragraph (1)(A).

(c) Advice to Holders and Opportunity To Answer. -- Before the Administrator revokes a certificate under subsection (b) of this section, the Administrator shall --

(1) advise the holder of the certificate of the charges or reasons on which the Administrator bases the proposed action; and

(2) provide the holder of the certificate an opportunity to answer the charges and state why the certificate should not be revoked.

(d) Appeals. -- (1) A person whose certificate is revoked by the Administrator under subsection (b) of this section may appeal the revocation order to the National Transportation Safety Board. The Board shall affirm or reverse the order after

providing notice and a hearing on the record. In conducting the hearing, the Board is not bound by the findings of fact of the Administrator.

(2) When a person files an appeal with the Board under this subsection, the order of the Administrator revoking the certificate is stayed. However, if the Administrator advises the Board that safety in air transportation or air commerce requires the immediate effectiveness of the order --

(A) the order remains effective; and

(B) the Board shall dispose of the appeal not later than 60 days after notification by the Administrator under this paragraph.

(3) A person substantially affected by an order of the Board under this subsection may seek judicial review of the order under section 46110 of this title. The Administrator shall be made a party to that judicial proceeding.

(e) Acquittal. -- (1) The Administrator may not revoke, and the Board may not affirm a revocation of, a certificate of registration under this section on the basis of an activity described in subsection (b)(1)(A) of this section if the holder of the certificate is acquitted of all charges related to a controlled substance in an indictment or information arising from the activity.

(2) If the Administrator has revoked a certificate of registration of a person under this section because of an activity described in subsection (b)(1)(A) of this section, the Administrator shall reissue a certificate to the person if the person --

(A) subsequently is acquitted of all charges related to a controlled substance in an indictment or information arising from the activity; and

(B) otherwise meets the requirements of section 44102 of this title.

Sec. 44107. Recordation of conveyances, leases, and security instruments

(a) Establishment of System. -- The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall establish a system for recording --

(1) conveyances that affect an interest in civil aircraft of the United States;

(2) leases and instruments executed for security purposes, including conditional sales contracts, assignments, and amendments, that affect an interest in --

(A) a specifically identified aircraft engine having at least 750 rated takeoff horsepower or its equivalent;

(B) a specifically identified aircraft propeller capable of absorbing at least 750 rated takeoff shaft horsepower;

(C) an aircraft engine, propeller, or appliance maintained for installation or use in an aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller, by or for an air carrier holding a certificate issued under section 44705 of this title; and

(D) spare parts maintained by or for an air carrier

holding a certificate issued under section 44705 of this title; and

(3) releases, cancellations, discharges, and satisfactions related to a conveyance, lease, or instrument recorded under clause (1) or (2) of this subsection.

(b) General Description Required. -- A lease or instrument recorded under subsection (a)(2)(C) or (D) of this section only has to describe generally the engine, propeller, appliance, or spare part by type and designate its location.

(c) Acknowledgment. -- Except as the Administrator otherwise may provide, a conveyance, lease, or instrument may be recorded under subsection (a) of this section only after it has been acknowledged before --

(1) a notary public; or

(2) another officer authorized under the laws of the United States, a State, the District of Columbia, or a territory or possession of the United States to acknowledge deeds.

(d) Records and Indexes. -- The Administrator shall --

(1) keep a record of the time and date that each conveyance, lease, and instrument is filed and recorded with the Administrator; and

(2) record each conveyance, lease, and instrument filed with the Administrator, in the order of their receipt, and index them by --

(A) the identifying description of the aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller, or location specified in a lease or instrument recorded under subsection (a)(2)(C) or (D) of this section; and

(B) the names of the parties to each conveyance, lease, and instrument.

Sec. 44108. Validity of conveyances, leases, and security instruments

(a) Validity Before Filing. -- Until a conveyance, lease, or instrument executed for security purposes that may be recorded under section 44107(a)(1) or (2) of this title is filed for recording, the conveyance, lease, or instrument is valid only against --

(1) the person making the conveyance, lease, or instrument;

(2) that person's heirs and devisees; and

(3) a person having actual notice of the conveyance, lease, or instrument.

(b) Period of Validity. -- When a conveyance, lease, or instrument is recorded under section 44107 of this title, the conveyance, lease, or instrument is valid from the date of filing against all persons, without other recordation, except that --

(1) a lease or instrument recorded under section 44107(a)(2)(A) or (B) of this title is valid for a specifically identified engine or propeller without regard to a lease or instrument previously or subsequently recorded under section 44107(a)(2)(C) or (D); and

(2) a lease or instrument recorded under section 44107(a)(2)(C) or (D) of this title is valid only for items at the location designated in the lease or instrument.

(c) Applicable Laws. -- (1) The validity of a conveyance,

lease, or instrument that may be recorded under section 44107 of this title is subject to the laws of the State, the District of Columbia, or the territory or possession of the United States at which the conveyance, lease, or instrument is delivered, regardless of the place at which the subject of the conveyance, lease, or instrument is located or delivered. If the conveyance, lease, or instrument specifies the place at which delivery is intended, it is presumed that the conveyance, lease, or instrument was delivered at the specified place.

(2) This subsection does not take precedence over the Convention on the International Recognition of Rights in Aircraft (4 U.S.T. 1830).

(d) Nonapplication. -- This section does not apply to --

(1) a conveyance described in section 44107(a)(1) of this title that was made before August 22, 1938; or

(2) a lease or instrument described in section 44107(a)(2) of this title that was made before June 20, 1948.

Sec. 44109. Reporting transfer of ownership

(a) Filing Notices. -- A person having an ownership interest in an aircraft for which a certificate of registration was issued under section 44103 of this title shall file a notice with the Secretary of the Treasury that the Secretary requires by regulation, not later than 15 days after a sale, conditional sale, transfer, or conveyance of the interest.

(b) Exemptions. -- The Secretary --

(1) shall prescribe regulations that establish guidelines for exempting a person or class from subsection (a) of this section; and

(2) may exempt a person or class under the regulations.

Sec. 44110. Information about aircraft ownership and rights

The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration may provide by regulation for --

(1) endorsing information on each certificate of registration issued under section 44103 of this title and each certificate issued under section 44704 of this title about ownership of the aircraft for which each certificate is issued; and

(2) recording transactions affecting an interest in, and for other records, proceedings, and details necessary to decide the rights of a party related to, a civil aircraft of the United States, aircraft engine, propeller, appliance, or spare part.

Sec. 44111. Modifications in registration and recordation system for aircraft not providing air transportation

(a) Application. -- This section applies only to aircraft not used to provide air transportation.

(b) Authority To Make Modifications. -- The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall make modifications in the system for registering and recording aircraft necessary to make the system more effective in serving the needs of --

(1) buyers and sellers of aircraft;

(2) officials responsible for enforcing laws related to the regulation of controlled substances (as defined in

section 102 of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 (21 U.S.C. 802)); and

(3) other users of the system.

(c) Nature of Modifications. -- Modifications made under subsection (b) of this section --

(1) may include a system of titling aircraft or registering all aircraft, even aircraft not operated;

(2) shall ensure positive, verifiable, and timely identification of the true owner; and

(3) shall address at least each of the following deficiencies in and abuses of the existing system:

(A) the registration of aircraft to fictitious persons.

(B) the use of false or nonexistent addresses by persons registering aircraft.

(C) the use by a person registering an aircraft of a post office box or "mail drop" as a return address to evade identification of the person's address.

(D) the registration of aircraft to entities established to facilitate unlawful activities.

(E) the submission of names of individuals on applications for registration of aircraft that are not identifiable.

(F) the ability to make frequent legal changes in the registration markings assigned to aircraft.

(G) the use of false registration markings on aircraft.

(H) the illegal use of "reserved" registration markings on aircraft.

(I) the large number of aircraft classified as being in "self-reported status".

(J) the lack of a system to ensure timely and adequate notice of the transfer of ownership of aircraft.

(K) the practice of allowing temporary operation and navigation of aircraft without the issuance of a certificate of registration.

(d) Regulations. -- (1) The Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall prescribe regulations to carry out this section and provide a written explanation of how the regulations address each of the deficiencies and abuses described in subsection (c) of this section. In prescribing the regulations, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall consult with the Administrator of Drug Enforcement, the Commissioner of Customs, other law enforcement officials of the United States Government, representatives of State and local law enforcement officials, representatives of the general aviation aircraft industry, representatives of users of general aviation aircraft, and other interested persons.

(2) Regulations prescribed under this subsection shall require that --

(A) each individual listed in an application for registration of an aircraft provide with the application the individual's driver's license number; and

(B) each person (not an individual) listed in an application for registration of an aircraft provide with the application the person's taxpayer identifying number.

Sec. 44112. Limitation of liability

(a) Definitions. -- In this section --

(1) "lessor" means a person leasing for at least 30 days a civil aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller.

(2) "owner" means a person that owns a civil aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller.

(3) "secured party" means a person having a security interest in, or security title to, a civil aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller under a conditional sales contract, equipment trust contract, chattel or corporate mortgage, or similar instrument.

(b) Liability. -- A lessor, owner, or secured party is liable for personal injury, death, or property loss or damage on land or water only when a civil aircraft, aircraft engine, or propeller is in the actual possession or control of the lessor, owner, or secured party, and the personal injury, death, or property loss or damage occurs because of --

(1) the aircraft, engine, or propeller; or

(2) the flight of, or an object falling from, the aircraft, engine, or propeller.