

**Title:** General Aviation Private Pilot Survey / Initial Certified Flight Instructor – Airplane Survey/ Designated Pilot Examiner Program Assessment

**Research Statement:** The FAA’s 2004-2008 Strategic Plan (Flight Plan) Increased Safety goal’s objective two intends “to reduce the number of fatal accidents in general aviation.” In order to meet this objective, the FAA’s General Aviation and Commercial Division (AFS-800) plans to improve the Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE) program. The DPE administers a practical test to evaluate the examinee’s (pilot) knowledge and skill to perform a task. When the DPE evaluates knowledge there should be 1) an adequate coverage of the knowledge domains, 2) consistency in the level of difficulty of questions across domains, 3) consistency in how the questions are presented, and 4) consistency in examiner knowledge of the goals of the examination. Problems arise when the DPEs are not consistent in the way they conduct practical tests. The variance could occur between examinees or within an examination – or between DPEs.

Research objectives include: what kind of intervention strategies can be developed to improve DPE performance? What kind of intervention strategies can improve the quality of FAA oversight of examiners? How effective are the interventions? How prepared and organized are the DPE’s when conducting practical tests?

To accomplish the research objectives, a general aviation private pilot national survey (similar to FAA’s ASW DPE general aviation private pilot survey) will be administered to all FSDOs within the United States. Newly certified general aviation private pilots should complete the survey within six weeks of the practical test. The FSDOs with the assistance of a contractor will provide a list of the GA pilots certified along with their home addresses to CAMI.

National private pilots’ will be surveyed in mid-2005. The purpose is to measure the effectiveness of the practical tests that examiners delivered in 2005.

**Background:** 14 CFR part 61 provides the regulatory basis for the conduct of practical tests for pilot certification. Part 183, subpart C provides the regulatory basis for the designation of pilot examiners. Designated examiners conduct over 95% of all pilot practical tests.

Title 49 of the United States Code chapter 447 section 44702 (d) authorizes the Administrator to delegate to a qualified private person, or to an employee under the supervision of that person, a matter related to the examination, testing, and inspection necessary to issue a certificate under this chapter as well as issuing the certificate. Subsequently 14 CFR part 183 provides the Administrator with the requirements for designating those private persons.

Any appropriately qualified airman may apply to the FAA for designation. Any pilot examiner may, as authorized by his/her designation, accept applications for the practical

tests necessary for issuing pilot certificates and ratings under 14 CFR Part 61. The examiner then conducts those tests and can issue pilot certificates and ratings to qualified applicants. A typical test in the Southwest Region takes about four to five hours, costs \$250.00 to \$1,000.00, and consists of a ground and flight portion. There are no data available nationally concerning the cost of tests administered by pilot examiners.

There are currently 1,066 private persons designated as pilot examiners by the Administrator. Those examiners conducted 124,311 practical tests (including retests) in 2003, an average of 117 practical tests per designee.

FAA Flight Standards Service (AFS) is responsible for effective oversight of the DPE program. That oversight is directly provided by Flight Standards District Offices (FSDO). The FSDO's must maintain adequate DPE records, current Vital Information System data and comply with other pertinent FAA policy orders. They must also ensure that DPE's conform to the pilot certification requirements of 14 CFR part 61 and the Practical Test Standards.

FAA's Southwest Region (ASW-200) found that DPEs failed to meet FAA policy orders and part 61 requirements. Questionnaires sent to newly certificated private pilots revealed that over 30% to 70% of applicants received incomplete practical tests. Approximately 40% were not being tested to meet the private pilot practical test standards, e.g., applicants reported unauthorized repeating of questions answered incorrectly and/or maneuvers performed poorly.

**Output:** Guidance to determine whether DPE's are conducting valid and effective practical tests. The survey results may determine the effectiveness of the examiner oversight program, develop corrective intervention strategies and document the impact of those changes.

CAMI will deliver summary data reports (i.e., item by item frequency distributions) for each FSDO that has at least eight respondents. CAMI will provide these reports every six months if we meet the respondent criterion; otherwise, CAMI will deliver on an annual basis. CAMI will also provide an overall data summary report.

CAMI will deliver a technical report summarizing the overall annual findings of the survey project. This report will be delivered three months following the delivery of the annual report.

The responses from all surveys will be used to determine the extent of pilot examiner compliance with the pilot certification requirements of 14 CFR Part 61, the Practical Test Standards and FAA policy. Should the data identify weaknesses in the pilot training and certification process, recommendations for corrective intervention strategies will be developed for implementation nationwide.

Regulatory Link: 14 CFR Part 61