

Flight School 101 – All About the FAA

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Author: [Dan Chambers](#)

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This is a continuing series of information for flight training students. The following article explains the purpose of the FAA, the history of the department and how it operates. It is important reading for [flight students](#), pilots and everyone who is interested in commercial aviation.

Role of the FAA

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is empowered by the U.S. Congress to promote aviation safety by prescribing safety standards for civil aviation.

Within the FAA, the Flight Standards Service sets the aviation standards for airmen and aircraft operations in the United States and for American airmen and aircraft around the world. The FAA Flight Standards Service is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and is broadly organized into divisions based on work function (Air Transportation, Aircraft Maintenance, Technical Programs, a Regulatory Support Division based in Oklahoma City, OK, and a General Aviation and Commercial Division). Regional Flight Standards division managers, one at each of the FAA's nine regional offices, coordinate Flight Standards activities within their respective regions.

The interface between the FAA Flight Standards Service and the aviation community and general public is the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). The approximately 90 FSDO's are strategically located across the United States, each office having jurisdiction over a specific geographic area. The individual FSDO is responsible for all air activity occurring within its geographic boundaries. In addition to accident investigation and the enforcement of aviation regulations, the individual FSDO is responsible for the certification and surveillance of air carriers, air operators, flight schools/training centers, and airmen including pilots and [flight instructors](#).

Each FSDO is staffed by aviation safety inspectors whose specialties include operations, maintenance, and avionics. General aviation operations inspectors are highly qualified and experienced aviators. Once accepted for the position, an inspector must satisfactorily complete a course of indoctrination training conducted at the FAA Academy, which includes airman evaluation and pilot testing techniques and procedures. Then the inspector must complete recurrent training on a regular basis. Among other duties, the FSDO inspector is responsible for administering FAA practical tests for pilot and flight instructor certificates and associated ratings.

The FAA currently has over 45,000 employees and an annual operating budget of \$16 billion. Randy Babbitt is the head FAA administrator.

History of the FAA

The Air Commerce Act of May 20, 1926, is the cornerstone of the federal government's regulation of civil aviation. This legislation was passed at the urging of the aviation industry, whose leaders believed the airplane could not reach its full commercial potential without federal action to improve and maintain safety standards. The Department of Commerce was initially responsible for all aeronautical responsibilities.

In 1938, the Civil Aeronautics Act transferred civil aviation responsibilities from the Commerce Department to a new independent agency, the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA.) The legislation also expanded the government's role by giving them the power to regulate airline fares and to determine the routes that air carriers would serve.

The approaching era of jet travel prompted passage of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958. This legislation gave the CAA's functions to a new independent body, the Federal Aviation Agency. The act transferred air safety regulation from the CAB to the new Federal Aviation Agency, and also gave it sole responsibility for a common civil-military system of air navigation and air traffic control.

In 1967, a new U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) combined major federal responsibilities for air and surface transport. Federal Aviation Agency's name changed to the Federal Aviation Administration and that is how today's FAA was born.

We will continue to bring flight students "Flight School 101" articles over time to help them with their careers.
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