

PROMPT FAA ACTION TO KEEP PILOTS FLYING AS COVID VACCINES ROLL OUT

News / Business aviation



NBAA welcomed prompt action by Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Steve Dickson and acting Federal Air Surgeon Dr. Brett Wyrick to ensure pilots may be vaccinated against COVID-19 without risk to their medical certificate. The Federal Drug Administration issued emergency-use authorization for Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine late Friday evening, Dec. 11. In an order issued the next morning, the FAA authorized pilots to receive the Pfizer vaccine, administered in two doses over a 21-day period, without compromising the validity of their pilot medical certificates.

Without such an order, pilots receiving vaccines that have not received full FDA approval risk invalidating their medical certificate. The order also applies to air traffic control personnel, who are also subject to FAA medical clearance requirements.

“We are grateful to the FAA for taking this immediate and proactive step to address medical certification concerns related to COVID-19 vaccinations that will aid in keeping the aviation industry moving forward,” said NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen. “Administrator Dickson’s previous military and civilian aviation experience continues to offer him unique insights on pilot-focused challenges, which in this case have proven astute, and we thank him and his team for their foresight and action on this matter.”

[Learn more about the FAA order.](#)

The FAA order requires that pilots must refrain from flying for 48 hours after receiving each dose of the Pfizer vaccine, after which time they may return to duty. Similar mandatory waiting periods are in place for those receiving other vaccines, the FAA noted, including against tuberculosis and typhoid.

While the agency “anticipates taking no additional measures to ensure safety after the initial window for side effects closes,” the FAA emphasized its medical professionals “will continuously monitor the initial distribution of the novel vaccine and documented clinical results and will adjust these recommendations as needed.”

Co-developed with Germany’s BioNTech, the Pfizer vaccine is the first COVID-19 vaccine to receive EUA in the United States, with a second vaccine from Moderna currently under FDA review. Initial clinical trials have shown both vaccines to be highly effective against the virus.



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