



Interagency Aviation TECH BULLETIN



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Subject: Aircraft Weight and Balance Compliance

Area of Concern: Documentation of Equipment Removal and Installation

Distribution: All USFS/DOI Contract Vendors and Operators

Discussion: Maintaining accurate aircraft weight and balance records is critical to ensuring the proper calculation of an aircraft's takeoff weight and center of gravity (CG) prior to flight. Compliance with established weight and CG limits is mandatory to meet the aircraft's certification requirements and to ensure safe, efficient, and predictable performance as designed by the manufacturer.

Recent Quality Assurance Audits of USFS and DOI vendors have identified recurring deficiencies related to the removal and installation of installed aircraft equipment (such as doors, seats, and cargo baskets) to meet mission requirements. Common issues include:

- Failure to document the removal and installation of equipment in the aircraft maintenance records.
- Failure to update the aircraft weight and balance record (Form C).
- Pilots performing maintenance actions without the required training and authorization under 14 CFR § 43.3(i).

The FAA classifies the addition or removal of equipment listed in the Aircraft Equipment List as a minor alteration. These actions are normally performed by an FAA-certificated mechanic or repairman, with appropriate entries made in the aircraft maintenance records and updates to the weight and balance data in the Pilot's Operating Handbook (POH) or Aircraft Flight Manual (AFM).

Under 14 CFR § 43.3(i), and further clarified in [FAA InFO 18002](#), a pilot may perform limited maintenance actions (such as removal/installation of doors, seats, or cargo baskets) only if the following conditions are met:

- The pilot has successfully completed an approved training program for the specific task.
- The pilot is authorized in writing by the certificate holder to perform the task; and
- The pilot is provided with written procedures for accomplishing the task.

When equipment is added or removed, pilots must document the action in the aircraft maintenance records and update the weight and balance record (Form C) to keep weight and CG calculations accurate.

Both USFS and DOI contracts include similar requirements. They specify that a list of all equipment installed at the time of weighing must be compiled. Items that can be easily installed or removed for configuration changes (such as fire shelters, seats, doors, radios, cargo hooks, baskets, and other mission-specific equipment) must also be listed with each item's name, weight, and arm. The weight and balance record must be updated any time equipment is added or removed in a way that more than negligibly affects the aircraft's center of gravity.

Recommendations: Vendors and operators:

1. Ensure all pilots who perform limited maintenance actions have documented task-specific training and written authorization in accordance with 14 CFR § 43.3(i) and FAA InFO 18002.
2. Require proper documentation of all equipment removal and installation in the aircraft maintenance records.
3. Require corresponding updates to the aircraft weight and balance records (Form C) for any change that affects weight or CG. Multiple Configurations (Form Cs) are an acceptable method of compliance.
4. Review [FAA-H-8083-1B](#), Aircraft Weight and Balance Handbook.
5. Strongly encourage personnel to consider attending the FAA's Safety Team's (<https://www.faasafety.gov/default.aspx>) free courses including:
 - a. ALC-103: Helicopter – Weight & Balance, Performance
 - b. ALC-180: Aircraft Maintenance Documentation for AMTs

Conclusion: Vendors are responsible for ensuring full compliance with these requirements. Failure to maintain accurate weight and balance records may result in grounding of aircraft for contractual non-compliance.

For questions, contact your geographical area Inspector.

/s/ Gene Bannister

Gene Bannister
Division Chief- Aviation Flight Standards
DOI, U.S. Wildland Fire Service

/s/ Russ Knight

Russ Knight
Airworthiness Branch Chief
USDA, Forest Service