

Aviation Group Client Update

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FAA CLARIFIES SEAT BELT AND SEATING REQUIREMENTS FOR GA FLIGHTS

Today, the FAA published a [clarification of prior interpretations](#) of the seat belt and seating requirements for general aviation (GA) flights.

This clarification is a result of the investigation conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) after an aircraft accident that occurred near the approach end of a runway at Bert Mooney Airport in Butte, Montana (BTM). On March 22, 2009, a Pilatus PC-12/45 operating under 14 CFR Part 91 descended and impacted the ground, resulting in the death of 13 passengers. Because the flight was a single-pilot operation, eight seats in the cabin and one seat in the cockpit were available to the 13 passengers. Thus, the number of passengers exceeded the number of available seats. The NTSB noted that if this accident had been less severe and the impact had been survivable, any unrestrained occupant or occupants sharing a single restraint system would have been at a much greater risk of injury or death.

FAA prior interpretations state that the shared use of a single restraint may be permissible. However, the FAA now clarifies that the use of a seat belt and/or seat by more than one occupant is permitted only if the seat usage conforms to the limitations contained in the approved portion of the Airplane Flight Manual (AFM). In addition, before multiple occupants use the same seat and/or seat belt, if the pertinent information is available, the pilot in command (PIC) must also check whether: (1) the seat belt is approved and rated for such use; and (2) the structural strength requirements for the seat are not exceeded.

Further, this clarification also emphasizes that because it is safer for each individual person to have his or her own seat and seat belt, whenever possible, each person onboard an aircraft should voluntarily be seated in a separate seat and be restrained by a separate seat belt.

This FAA clarification is effective as of **May 24, 2012**. Please contact our office if you have questions regarding this clarification.

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