

A Fresh Look at Aviation Safety and Medical Risk



The Vision

We have all experienced regulations or standards intended to serve the public that did not clearly align with our perception of the risk. That may have caused puzzlement, frustration, a loss of trust in the rule-making authority, or disregard for the rule.

Now imagine a future where the criteria for medical fitness-to-fly are transparent and more logical. A future where pilot health requirements are clearly aligned to the performance requirements of their assigned aircraft. A future where pilots can seek the medical care they need without fear of loss of livelihood from a potentially overly conservative standard. A future where innovative and enduring risk management methods accommodate differences in pilots, aircraft equipage, and automation to optimally manage systemic risks to aviation safety.

The Case for Change

Aeromedical risk acceptance may be conservative due to uncertainty about a pilot's health as they ready for a flight and the specific mental and physical demands of them for a given aircraft and operation. These risk management challenges – along with government resourcing and economic constraints, pilot workforce growth, healthcare ecosystem changes, and increasing population morbidity – all indicate that business as usual and minor process adjustments are not sufficient. Now is the time for new thinking – and we sense stakeholders are ready to collaborate in shaping a new approach.

An Opportunity for Collaboration

The public has high expectations for aviation safety. The FAA has the responsibility to translate public expectations into regulations and standards. Operators control their operations and have data about how aircraft systems perform. Pilots manage their health and fly safely. Together, these perspectives and data can inform risk-based safety criteria for medical certification, reducing conservatism caused by uncertainty, and favoring evidence based decisions and processes.

Since the operational community can establish a richer and more practical control set, we seek input on key questions (see sidebar). You are invited to an exploratory discussion to share your needs, challenges, and ideas regarding managing medical risks to aviation safety. We will not attribute statements from these conversations to you or your organization. Following an initial exploratory discussion, stakeholders may choose to participate in follow-on workshops that are intended to clarify opportunities and collaboratively shape solutions.

We seek industry partners to collaboratively re-envision aeromedical certification. Together, we will explore and shape the feasibility of fresh, new future approaches for better managing medical risks to aviation safety.

Industry input can help address questions about the future of aviation safety such as *how might we...*

- **better manage pilot health-related safety risks?**
- **verify that risks are consistently managed at an acceptable level of risk?**
- **optimize data use to ensure the public's interest in aviation safety is met?**
- **benefit from integrating physical and mental health into a collaborative safety management approach?**

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