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InFO

Information for Operators

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An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

Subject: Navigation Database Master Minimum Equipment List (MMEL) Relief

Purpose: This InFO provides guidance on Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-Approved MMEL relief allowed by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) and associated operator Minimum Equipment List (MEL) for aircraft navigation databases.

Background: The FAA established MMEL relief for out of currency navigation databases on January 20, 1999, thru MMEL Policy Letter (PL)-98, revision 0, Navigation Databases. This PL allowed for MMEL relief and continued use of an out of currency navigation database (without an existing inoperative condition) as long as the operator verified the data being used before flight.

Discussion: The FAA Air Transportation Division (AFS-200) conducted a review of MMEL PL-98. As a result of this review, AFS-200 determined that MMEL relief for a navigation database that is operative, but out of currency is not necessary. PL-98, revision 1 removes MMEL relief for an out of currency navigation database while still allowing relief for an inoperative database.

For an instrument or equipment item to be considered for relief, the item must be inoperative. Inoperative is defined in MMEL PL-25, revision 20, MMEL and MEL Definitions:

“Inoperative: A system and/or component malfunction to the extent that it does not accomplish its intended purpose and/or is not consistently functioning normally within its approved operating limit(s) and/or tolerance(s).” Since the navigation database continues to operate normally and can be used while in an out of currency status, it is not inoperative per the definition and is not identified as inoperative as required by regulation. Therefore, it does not require MMEL relief under 14 CFR.

Navigation databases should be current for the duration of flight. However, if the database is not current prior to flight, or if the Aeronautical Information Regulation and Control (AIRAC) cycle changes during flight, operators should establish procedures to be conducted prior to flight that ensure the accuracy of the navigation database for the route to be flown. One acceptable method is to compare the database with the current applicable aeronautical charts to verify navigation information prior to dispatch. If changes to the current charts for the route to be flown (including alternate information) have been published, the aircraft database should not be used to conduct flight operations. It is the operator’s responsibility to ensure that the highest level of safety is maintained when utilizing out of currency navigation databases for flight operations.

Under no circumstances should flightcrews or maintenance personnel attempt to alter or manipulate the aircraft database. This is not intended to contradict 14 CFR part 43, § 43.3(k), which addresses updating of aircraft databases by pilots.

References. The FAA is incorporating expanded navigation database guidance into the Advisory Circulars (AC) listed below as well as the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM). It is strongly recommended that operators review the following current ACs and remain alert for the publication of the updated guidance:

- AC 20-138, *Airworthiness Approval of Positioning and Navigation Systems*, chapters 8–10, 12, and appendix 2.
- AC 20-153, *Acceptance of Aeronautical Data Processes and Associated Databases*, paragraph 13.
- AC 90-100, *U.S. Terminal and En Route Area Navigation (RNAV) Operations*, paragraphs 10 and 11.
- AC 90-101, *Approval Guide for RNP Procedures with AR*, appendices 3–5.
- AC 90-105, *Approval Guidance for RNP Operations and Barometric Vertical Navigation in the U.S. National Airspace System*, chapter 8, and appendices A and B.

Recommended Action. Operators should conduct a review of their procedures for aircraft operation with a non-current navigation database. As appropriate, operators should coordinate with their Principal Operations Inspector (POI) or local FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) with oversight responsibility and verify that their procedures achieve an acceptable level of compliance with the database currency requirements found in the aforementioned ACs. In many, if not most cases, operator procedures developed for MEL compliance to MMEL PL-98, revision 0, should be acceptable for continued use.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the Air Transportation New Program and Implementation Branch, AFS-240 at (202) 267-8166.