



U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces Historic Commercial Space Transportation Reforms

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao today announced the publication of the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Streamlined Launch and Reentry Licensing Requirements [Final Rule](#) (PDF) for commercial space transportation [launches and reentries](#).

“This historic, comprehensive update to commercial space launch and reentry licensing requirements facilitates greater growth in this industry and helps America to maintain our #1 position in the world,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

This rule modernizes the way FAA [regulates and licenses commercial space operations](#) and allows the burgeoning aerospace industry to continue to innovate and grow, while maintaining public safety.

Deputy Assistant to the President and Executive Secretary of the National Space Council Dr. Scott Pace said, “In meeting the President’s mandate in Space Policy Directive-2 to streamline regulations on commercial spaceflight, the Department of Transportation is strengthening the United States’ continued leadership in space commerce. I commend Secretary Chao, the Department, and the Office of Commercial Space Transportation for

updating launch regulations and licensing to ensure the United States remains the flag of choice for the growing commercial space sector.”

The new rule consolidates four regulatory parts and applies a single set of licensing and safety regulations for all types of vehicle operations. It also provides flexibility for operators to meet safety requirements. The rule improves efficiency by encouraging launch and reentry operators to suggest and implement design and operational solutions to meet the regulatory standards.

“This rule paves the way for an industry that is moving at lightning speed,” said FAA Administrator Steve Dickson. “We are simplifying the licensing process and enabling industry to move forward in a safe manner.”

The final rule’s improved application processes allow:

- A single operator’s license that can be used to support multiple launches or reentries from potentially multiple launch site locations.
- Early review when applicants submit portions of their license application incrementally.
- Applicants to negotiate mutually agreeable reduced time frames for submittals and application review periods.
- Applicants to apply for a safety element approval with a license application, instead of needing to submit a separate application.
- Additional flexibility on how to demonstrate high consequence event protection.
- Neighboring operations personnel to stay during launch or reentry in certain circumstances.
- Ground safety oversight to be scoped to better fit the safety risks and reduce duplicative requirements when operating at a federal site.

This rule will become effective 90 days after publication in the *Federal Register*. The FAA will initially seek public comment (for a period of 30 days) on three [Advisory Circulars](#) (ACs) on the following topics: [High Consequence Protection](#) (PDF), [High Fidelity Flight Safety Analysis](#) (PDF), and [Computing Systems and Software](#) (PDF). The FAA may issue updated versions of these ACs if warranted based on comments received. Each AC will contain a feedback form with specific instructions on how to provide comments to the FAA on that AC.

Twenty-four additional ACs will be published within one year or as needed. Legacy licenses can still be used for up to five years after the rule’s effective date.

FAA is responsible for ensuring the protection of the public, property, national security and foreign policy interests of the U.S. during commercial launch or reentry activities. The agency also encourages, facilitates, and promotes U.S. [commercial space transportation](#). To date, FAA has [licensed](#) or permitted more than 380 launches and reentries.