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FAA INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS ON COMMERCIAL SPACE TRANSPORTATION

Abstract

International regulatory cooperation in commercial space transportation historically has been rather limited. With the emergence of suborbital space transportation, an increase in demand to launch small satellites, and renewed overall interest in the commercial space sector, regulations from the United States Federal Aviation Administration's Office of Commercial Space Transportation (FAA/AST) are viewed by other countries as a model to adopt. The FAA has authorized over 290 licensed and permit commercial launches since 1989.

As part of international cooperation, the FAA has invited government representatives from several countries to attend specialized regulatory workshops in Washington, DC.

Workshops are typically one to two days of detailed briefings by FAA/AST that describe how FAA safety regulations work along with the law and philosophies behind them, and overall give visiting governments the opportunity to ask questions and learn from FAA experience.

Each workshop is tailored to individual needs of the visiting government. Many countries are trying to attract suborbital Reusable Launch Vehicles (RLVs) and develop a launch site ("spaceport"). Other countries are interested in how the FAA regulates Expendable Launch Vehicles (ELVs) or want to compare FAA regulations to ongoing privatization efforts. Several countries are developing new legislation for commercial space transportation.

A typical workshop covers a variety of FAA regulatory topics such as: RLV licensing and experimental permits, system safety, risk analysis, environmental compliance, inspection, liability and financial responsibility, safety approvals, launch site licensing, human space flight recommended practices, mishaps, and air and space integration. Since 2009, FAA has conducted workshops for seven different countries and one for the European Aviation Safety Agency.

The FAA is promoting its regulations for international adoption with a major goal of interoperability. Under U.S. law, any U.S. launch or reentry operated by a U.S. company outside the United States has to be licensed by the FAA.

This paper will describe FAA workshops, FAA international outreach activity, and benefits from workshops as countries evaluate future interoperability in commercial space transportation.