

FAA Q&A On Unapproved Parts

Question: How big/serious of a problem is the proliferation of unapproved parts in the FAA's estimation?

Answer. The FAA oversees the design and production of hundreds of millions of aviation products and parts each year. While the FAA considers unapproved parts a risk to the aviation system, reports of Suspected Unapproved Parts (SUP) account for a very small fraction of all aviation products and parts. Upon investigation, only a few SUP reports result in a determination that a part is unapproved and an even smaller number ever result in an unsafe condition. Additionally, when an unsafe condition exists, an Emergency Airworthiness Directive (AD) may be issued that requires immediate action by an owner/operator. The intent of an Emergency AD is to rapidly correct an urgent safety of flight situation.

Question: What are the risks associated with using unapproved parts?

Answer. Unapproved aircraft parts may not properly perform their intended function. An installed unapproved part increases risk, reduces safety, and could introduce an unexpected threat to an operating aircraft.

Question: How does the agency identify unapproved parts?

Answer. SUPs are detected and reported in various ways. The FAA has published Advisory Circular 21-29, Detecting and Reporting Suspected Unapproved Parts that provides guidance to the aviation community on how to detect SUPs and report them to the FAA.

Anyone, e.g., an FAA employee, a manufacturer, mechanic, pilot, or private citizen, can report a suspected SUP to the FAA through the Aviation Safety Hotline. A SUP report may be submitted anonymously or confidentially.

Question: What is the FAA doing to crack down on the manufacturing, distribution, and use of unapproved parts?

Answer. The FAA's SUP program is designed to eliminate the safety risk posed by unapproved parts in the U.S. aviation system by:

- Conducting aggressive and consistent surveillance for suspected unapproved parts;
- Investigating thoroughly and expeditiously when suspected unapproved parts are detected or reported;
- Taking appropriate enforcement action when unapproved parts are found; and
- Coordinating FAA efforts with law enforcement agencies engaged in the prosecution of criminal activity.

Question: What are the penalties if a manufacturer is found producing aviation parts without FAA approval?

Answer. SUP investigations often result in enforcement actions. These actions may include educational and remedial training efforts, administrative action in the form of either a warning notice or letter of correction, and certificate suspensions or revocations. In some cases, the FAA works with the Department of Transportation to enact civil penalties (which can range from \$12,856 to \$32,140 per violation and with law enforcement agencies for criminal prosecution.

Question: What are the penalties if a parts dealer misrepresents unapproved items as approved?

Answer. The different penalties are listed in the response to the previous question. The level of the penalty would be commensurate with the level the offense.

Question: We reviewed Unapproved Part Notifications (UPN) released by the Administration over the last 10 years and found 22 notices warning about manufacturers, sellers, and distributors based in California. Is there a reason why more notices were issued for California based companies than any other state?

Answer. California has a robust aviation industry with a large number of manufacturers that could possibly correlate to a higher number of investigations and associated UPNs.

Question: We purchased several parts online claiming to be FAA approved, however did not include a form 8130-3 to verify. Should this be of concern to suspected buyers, or is it common for parts to not have a form 8130-3 when purchased?

Answer. The absence of an FAA Form 8130-3 does not necessarily indicate a part is unapproved. FAA Form 8130-3 is not required by U.S. regulations for domestic use.