

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

How to Become a DOD Approved Air Carrier

HOW TO BECOME DOD APPROVED

The requirements for Department of Defense (DOD) approval of commercial air carriers used for the transportation of DOD personnel and cargo are established as follows:

- Title 10, US Code, Section 2640
- DOD Instruction 4500.53
- 32 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) Part 861

Commercial air carriers wanting to do business with the DOD must be FAR Part 135 or 121 certificated and must have 12 months of continuous service equivalent to the service sought by the DOD. (Ref: 32 CFR Part 861.4(e)(1), includes aircraft type, international procedures, etc) The DOD Commercial Airlift Division, located at Scott AFB, IL., is the sole authority within the DOD to review commercial air carriers in the process to become DOD approved.

TO BID ON DOD AIRLIFT CONTRACTS

Go to <https://sam.gov> to bid on DOD airlift contracts. Contracting offices will determine based on their requirements whether an air carrier must be DOD approved prior to bidding on a contract. If in response to a relatively short-notice airlift requirement, then the contracting agency may have no choice but to award the contract to a carrier that is already DOD approved.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Commercial air carriers may request to begin the approval process but they should have insight as to what service they intend to offer the DOD and there should be a reasonable expectation the DOD has a need or requirement for those services. A DOD contracting agency may identify a commercial air carrier as a potential awardee on a DOD contract and request they become DOD approved. Another option is if the commercial air carrier wants to become a Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) carrier. You can find more information about the CRAF program on this web site www.amc.af.mil/Home/AMC-Commercial-Services/.

To begin the process, the air carrier must fill out a DOD Statement of Intent (AMC Form 207) and both the DOD Maintenance Air Carrier Survey Preparation Checklist and DOD Operations Air Carrier Survey Preparation Checklist. All items can be found on this website.

Once the AMC Form 207 and checklists are received by the DOD Commercial Airlift Division, personnel will review the documents and contact the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and company representatives. Based on preliminary information, the DOD Commercial Airlift Division will determine if the carrier has the necessary programs in place to meet DOD Quality and Safety Requirements (Q&S) (see 32 CFR Part 861) to justify scheduling an actual on-site survey. These Q&S requirements are customer-oriented, focused on safety, and based on the best practices in the air carrier industry. The commercial air carrier will be invited to Scott AFB to meet with our office personnel to discuss the requirements in more detail and to help prepare for their on-site survey, this visit is voluntary.

On-site survey teams normally consist of one operations and one maintenance evaluator. These two evaluators will review programs, examine documentation, and conduct interviews on a noninterference basis with the carrier. FAA principal inspectors will also be contacted. The results of DOD surveys are shared with the FAA, Department of Interior for common carriers, and when requested, the National Transportation Safety Board.

The approval process takes approximately 120 days or more from the date the documents are received by the DOD Commercial Airlift Division, all follow up questions are answered by the carrier seeking approval, and the determination is made to conduct an on-site survey. Since previously approved carriers require recurring biennial surveys, our schedule is driven by those demands first, and initial surveys may be delayed due to limited scheduling opportunities and resources.

ONCE APPROVED -- DOD EVALUATIONS

DOD air carriers receive continuous oversight to include biennial on-site surveys, semi-annual desktop performance evaluations (PEs), cockpit observations and aircraft ramp inspections. A PE consists of interface, usually via telephone, between our personnel and the FAA principal inspectors assigned to the carrier. The DOD expectation is carriers meet all Q&S requirements on a continuous basis. All evaluations are based on the criteria published in 32 CFR Part 861.