



## Department of the Interior Accident Prevention Bulletin

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Page 1 of 2

**Subject:** Seat Fares

**Area of Concern:** Acquisition Regulations & Employee Safety

**Distribution:** All Aviation Activities

**Discussion:** Getting from one place to another by airplane or helicopter should be simple, but sometimes it can be confusing. Especially when it comes to “seat fare” purchases.

Recent OAS Aviation Program Evaluations have discovered that seat fare purchases have been made outside of Departmental policy. A basic lack of understanding about seat fares was cited most often as the cause.

353 DM 1 *Aircraft Contracting*, paragraphs 1.2A(1) and 1.2(b), refer to seat fares as being applicable to a scheduled air carrier (14 CFR Part 121). A scheduled air carrier is, for example, Alaska Airlines or Southwest Airlines, but not Part 135 operators (which the Department uses most often).



With essential air service to smaller communities in Alaska being provided by Part 135 certificate holders, the Alaska Interagency Aviation Working Group (AIAWG) presented recommended policy language changes to the OAS through the Alaska Cooperative Planning Group (ACPG) to permit the purchase of seat fares for transportation in Alaska by Interior employees on approved Part 135 certificate holders. The ACPG is comprised of all DOI Alaska Agency Directors and chaired by the Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior for Alaska. The proposal effectively manages the risk to Interior employees by eliminating off-airport takeoffs and landings and eliminating the use of tandem seat aircraft. The proposal was accepted and is included in OPM 13-15 [http://oas.doi.gov/library/opm/CY2013/OPM\\_13-15.pdf](http://oas.doi.gov/library/opm/CY2013/OPM_13-15.pdf).

OPM 13-15 *Acquisition of Seat Fares in Alaska*, defines a seat fare as the cost for a DOI employee to occupy one seat between two different airports where the aircraft is not under the exclusive control of the DOI. It does not include any charter or on-demand operations. OPM 13-15 also defines point-to-point flights as a flight between airports that are identified in the current Alaska Supplement **and** Appendix 2, Supplemental Locations identified by the AIAWG.



## So here's the deal:



In the Lower 48, seat fare purchases can be made with a Part 121 air carrier **ONLY**. This means that you can't use your government credit card to purchase aviation services for DOI missions on helicopters or other on-demand type operations performing DOI missions. The department uses a very thorough contracting process that incorporates standards to ensure safety, efficiency, and mission success. Purchases outside of that policy leave personnel and their respective supervisors in a very vulnerable position.

In Alaska, seat fare purchases can be made for flights (Part 121 and approved Part 135 air carriers) between airports that are identified in the current Alaska Supplement or waterways listed Appendix 2, Supplemental identified by the AIAWG.



Flying on DOI carded aircraft with a carded pilot assures that the pilot and aircraft have been inspected and comply with the provisions within that particular DOI contract. There is no instrument to compel the operator to comply with all of the established safeguards built in to those contracts if the contracting process is bypassed. These requirements provide an extra layer of protection for our most valued asset... YOU!

If you have any questions, please contact your Bureau Aviation Manager.

*/s/ Keith C. Raley*

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and Program Evaluations