

Response to NPA 2008-20

Dear Sir,

My name is Chris Brady and I am the Boeing 737 check flight pilot at easyJet. I also conduct post maintenance check flights and customer demonstration flights for other airlines and agencies. I have not attended a test pilot course but I was briefed by the CAA in 1993 for Group A & B aircraft (light singles & twins), and again in 2005 for the Boeing 737. These briefings and the associated flight with the CAA Chief Test Pilot constituted approval to conduct continued airworthiness flight tests for the renewal of C of A. I now have over 300hrs flight test time, including over 100 full airworthiness flight tests on the B737.

I read NPA 2008-20 with great interest but I feel that it leaves many questions unanswered, particularly with regard to post maintenance check flights and customer demonstration flights.

Post Maintenance Check Flights

These are flights required by the maintenance manual after certain work has been completed. On the Boeing 737 this can include manual reversion flight to verify the rigging of elevator and/or aileron tabs.

Customer Demonstration Flights

These flights are conducted when an aircraft is being handed back to the leasing company at the end of its lease. The contractual requirement is usually for “a 2 hour demonstration flight”; however it is industry standard practice to base this on the Boeing production flight test procedures; or in the UK, the CAA Check Flight Schedule. Checks include engine shutdown & relights, depressurisation, flight above Mmo & Vmo (if allowed in the AFM) and stick shake speed verification.

Customer Demonstration Flights are almost always conducted after heavy maintenance (eg C or D check) and therefore often include any necessary AMM flight test items.

The above two types of flights are beyond the safe limits of the majority of airline pilots, and yet they can at present legally perform such flights. In practice these flights are conducted by a small number of experienced pilots, most of whom do not have formal test pilot training, such as myself.

I would suggest that Post maintenance Check Flights be regarded as Cat 4 and that Customer Demonstration Flights be regarded as Cat 3.

Furthermore, because Customer Demonstration flights occur during a change of operator, it is impractical to stipulate that the flight crew members must be appointed by the organisation performing the flight test. The suitability to perform a production flight test schedule is, in my opinion very similar to that specified in NPA 2008-20 24.2.b.i.3. ie a significant amount of relevant flight experience and participation in at least 5 flight tests. This should allow most existing Demonstration Flight pilots to be

able continue their essential work, whilst ensuring that any new pilots are suitably trained.

I look forward to your response.

Best regards

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