

This letter is in regard to Erickson Aero Tanker, LLC ("EAT") Petition for Reconsideration of the denial of their exemption request in Regulatory Docket No FAA-2017-0133.

We strongly oppose the FAA granting an exemption to 14 CFR Part 25.201(b)(1) as requested by EAT. Such an exemption will clearly set a precedent for future aircraft certifications that will significantly decrease aviation safety. Thus, it is not in the public interest.

The three undersigned are all current FAA Designated Engineering Representative (DER) Flight Test Pilots and together represent over 120 years of combined flight test experience in all types of airplanes, ranging from light twin turboprops thru B-747s. We are clearly accepted as experts in the field of Flight Test by the FAA.

Certification stall testing is typically conducted by highly trained and qualified test pilots, and there are many variables that are held constant during the tests. Testing is performed at altitude, with no initial fear of ground impact. The testing is planned, conducted in a low workload environment with absolutely no startle factor. The test crews are well rested with crew fatigue being minimized. All aircraft systems are functional, and high levels of extra instrumentation are installed to augment the aircraft pilot displays. Stall entry rate (the deceleration rate into the maneuver) is specifically targeted to be approximately 1 knot per second deceleration rate. A stable air mass (no turbulence, no gusts), visible horizon and no restrictions to visibility are all test requirements. N_z , the "g loading" is kept as close to 1.0 as possible. For turning stalls, the turn is established prior to stall entry, and held constant at 30 degrees. Increasing entry rate, and or N_z levels will significantly deteriorate the stall characteristics. Startle factor, fear of ground impact, potentially restricted visibility, limited visible horizon due to terrain, and turbulence will also contribute to aggravate stall characteristics and delayed recovery. Aerial firefighting is an extremely fatiguing job, and fatigued crews do not always have the reactions, or reaction times that well rested crews do. Since the EAT MD87 failed to meet the requirements of FAR 25.203 for Flaps 40/Gear UP (as evidence by their application for the exemption) under controlled testing by trained test pilots, then the real life expectations will be much worse due to all of these other factors. This does not increase safety and it is not in the public interest to grant this exemption.

Stall speed testing establishes the baseline for all aircraft performance, as well as being the basis for all low speed aircraft handling qualities testing. For stall speeds to be relevant, the stall characteristics must be acceptable, without exception. Every aircraft certified to date in the United States has been required to meet the requirements of FAR 25.201 and 203. The reason that US certified aircraft enjoy such an exceptional safety record is that all applicants are held to the same standard. It is impossible to say that by exempting EAT from meeting this standard that the FAA is increasing aviation safety. In fact, the resulting precedent will have a huge decrease in aviation safety, as it will be very difficult for the FAA to deny future exemption requests from other applicants to waive such critical handling qualities standards.

The greatest reason that the exemption should be denied is that there is nothing in EATs' public filings with regard to this exemption request to indicate that they have made an attempt to

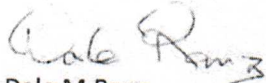
provide an aerodynamic solution to rectify the unacceptable stall characteristics for the aircraft configuration desired in their petition. It is inappropriate to grant an exemption to a handling qualities regulation that is critical to flight safety if an applicant that hasn't made an effort to resolve the issue. If the applicant had made a reasonable effort to find an aerodynamic solution and failed, then perhaps it would be appropriate to attempt to receive an exemption. Every single OEM and every STC applicant involving modified airplane aerodynamics, spend enormous amount of time, money and energy to not only to demonstrate acceptable stall characteristics, but often time to improve them should they be found to be non-compliant. For example, Aviation Partners Boeing, during the flight testing of the blended winglets on the B-767-300, found stall characteristics to be unacceptable at a particular flap setting. They spent significant time and money to develop a plan to add vortilons to the leading edges of the wing to make the stall characteristics acceptable, and then to verify this with flight testing. This made the airplane notably safer for the public. An aerodynamic solution to the problem with the EAT MD-87 is more than likely possible and would be in the public interest. An exemption without effort by the applicant to resolve the underlying aerodynamic problem is clearly not increasing the safety level, nor is it the same level of safety enforced on all other aircraft.

In conclusion, the FAA did not make factual errors when they first denied the petition for an exemption with regard to the stall characteristics. Granting an exemption to basic aircraft handling requirements is a very slippery slope. The petition for reconsideration should be denied.

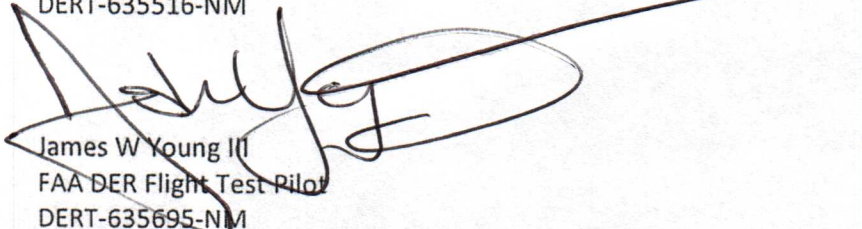
Sincerely



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