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NPRM Repair Station Notes

On behalf of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters-Airline Division (IBT-AD), we submit the following comments regarding the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on repair stations, published on May 21, 2012, Fed. Reg. 77, No. 98. The IBT-AD finds many of the FAA's proposed rules to be effective in addressing the many safety concerns the IBT-AD has raised regarding the regulation of repair functions, but finds other rules inadequate to deal with the dangers posed by the use of foreign repair stations or other questionable practices. In assessing each of the proposed rules, the IBT-AD is driven by its goal of preserving the highest, and most verifiable, level of safety consistent with our members' shared experience and the best practices in the industry they have identified.

In regard to Proposed Rule 145.1012, the IBT-AD supports allowing the FAA to deny or revoke a Repair Station license for falsifying documents. The entire maintenance regime is highly dependent upon the correct documentation of repairs and maintenance, and we find that there must be severe punishments for undermining such an important principle of aircraft safety.

The IBT-AD supports Proposed Rule 145.1051 (e), which allows the FAA to deny application for a Repair Station Certificate because of a prior revocation of a Repair Station Certificate or because of the involvement of key personnel at that Station in a prior revocation of a Repair Station Certificate. The IBT-AD finds that this rule does not go far enough, and asks the FAA to consider maintaining a list of persons or entities that have been involved in repair stations that have had their certificates revoked, so as to allow more effective application of the Proposed Rule. Alternatively, we ask the FAA to consider requiring an applicant for a Repair

Station Certificate to affirmatively disclose whether it has previously had a certificate revoked, or whether any of its key personnel have been involved in the revocation of a Certificate.

The IBT-AD disagrees with Proposed Rule 145.1109 that a Repair Station applicant need not purchase or itself maintain all equipment required for the scope of the work they are applying to perform. Requiring that the applicant only have access to all necessary equipment sets up a dynamic wherein the Repair Station may find it cannot acquire necessary equipment in a timely manner. This runs the unnecessary risk that non-certified tooling or non-certified alternate methods could be used to meet customer demand. The IBT-AD suggests that all necessary tooling should be maintained by the certified Repair Station, thus ensuring the FAA's ability to ensure the safety of tools and techniques that the Station will employ.

The IBT strongly disagrees with Proposed Rule 145.1053(b), which allows an entity other than the FAA to certify a Repair Station outside the borders of the United States without the FAA performing an onsite inspection and certification. While the IBT-AD understands that the United States has many bilateral Aviation Safety Agreements, it should be apparent that relinquishing FAA oversight to foreign entities will allow countries with less experience with or interest in aircraft safety to certify facilities that are not up to U.S. standards, thus allowing foreign entities to erode the hard-won safety of the American flying public.

The IBT-AD also disagrees with Proposed Rule 145.1058, which would allow a Repair Station to "Self Evaluate" and thus add to their capabilities list without specific FAA approval. The FAA safety regime is self-evidently undermined when Repair Stations are not required to demonstrate to the FAA itself their capability to perform new types of work they wish to perform.

The IBT disagrees strongly with Proposed Rule 145.1217, allowing an FAA-certified Repair Station to contract work to a non-FAA certified repair station. This is especially troublesome in foreign countries where there is no way for the FAA to verify that the contractor has the capability to perform the work to the FAA mandated standards. Allowing such contracting would therefore lead to the

transfer of aircraft maintenance to facilities that are completely outside of FAA oversight and not subject to any FAA regulation.

The IBT-AD notes that Proposed Rule 145.1205 is too vague and should be clarified because the Rule does not clearly specify that instructions given by an Air Carrier or Air Operator must comply with the company maintenance procedures the FAA has certified.

The IBT-AD strongly supports Proposed Rules 145.1157 and 145.1153 as necessary and indeed long overdue. It agrees that any person returning an aircraft or component to airworthy condition as well as supervising that work must possess appropriate FAA certifications and must be able to read, write, understand and speak English. A strong knowledge of English is necessary to understand the manuals and training and is also necessary to ensure that the FAA can test and certify that person's compliance with regulations and safety procedures. Given the FAA's recognition of the importance of supervisors of repair work being able to speak English (in order to understand manuals and safety regulations, and to allow effective enforcement), it should be equally obvious that Proposed Rule 145.1151 be extended to require all Repair Station workers performing maintenance on US registered aircraft to read, write, understand and speak English, as well requiring them to possess the required FAA certificates to perform such work.

Finally, the IBT-AD supports changing Proposed Rule 145.1153 so that Repair Stations are required to retain training records for the length of an employee's employment, rather than the proposed two years. This alteration would not require employers to bear much, if any, additional costs, but would allow the FAA a greater ability to identify defects in a training program should such defects become apparent.