



Are You Prepared for an FAA Ramp Check?

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Many aircraft owners lease their aircraft. When the leased aircraft is over 12,000lbs MTOW (considered a “Large Aircraft” under the regulations) the FAA requires that such leases comply with the Truth-in-Leasing requirements of FAR 91.23. One of these requirements is to notify the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) within 48 hours of the First Flight under the lease.

The First Flight notification must contain information about the make and model of the aircraft and its registration number, name of the lessee/operator, the date and time of the flight and the airport from which it will be departing, usually by a letter faxed to the local FSDO. This process is described under Order #8900.1 Vol 3 Chapter 13 Section 6 of the Flight Standards Information Management Systems which provides guidance to FAA Inspectors to determine that an aircraft lease is compliant with FAR Part 91.23.

Typically, many FSDOs do not respond to these notifications, but they do have the right to request other information or perform a ramp check of the aircraft after the First Flight notification has been provided. Certain FSDO’s have recently followed up on First Flight letters by contacting the lessee to let them know that they may be making a ramp check and will require additional information at that time. The additional information they are requesting closely tracks the guidance in Order 8900.1. Therefore, we are recommending that all aircraft lessees be prepared (even without prior notification from the FSDO) for a ramp check in response to a First Flight Letter. The following information would typically be what the FAA could ask for prior to or during a ramp check.

- Where and when the aircraft can be seen before departure.
- Type of aircraft.
- Name of the lessee
- Name of lessor
- Who is going to fly the aircraft, including names of crewmembers, if known.
- Where the aircraft is presently located (if information is requested prior to the flight).
- Aircraft destination and en route stops, if any.
- Nature of the flight (i.e. Cargo, passenger or both).
- Name of person or parties considered to be in “operational control” of the aircraft.

- Type of inspection and maintenance program the aircraft has been maintained under during the preceding 12 months.
- Status of compliance with applicable maintenance and inspection requirements.

The FAA collects this information to determine the “risk” level of the operation (i.e. whether the operator is familiar with and closely following the regulations). If the operator provides sufficient information and/or is well known to the FSDO, the FAA may forego the ramp check as this demonstrates there is low risk of any violations of the regulations.



Kathleen H. Breckenridge has represented private and corporate aircraft owners and operators for over fourteen years. She concentrates her practice in the areas of business and tax planning, U.S. aircraft export and import, acquisitions and sales, leasing, fractional ownership, and chartering and management of corporate aircraft. Ms. Breckenridge’s world-wide clients have benefited from her invaluable experience with complex international transactions. Ms. Breckenridge has authored articles for Business Aviation Advisors, World Aircraft Sales Management, China Daily, and Asia Weekly and she is registered to the Bar Association in Missouri, Kansas and Illinois. For more information please visit www.coolinglaw.com.