

DRAFT LETTER - FAA Airline Survey: Contamination of Hidden Areas in Aircraft

Subject: FAA Survey for Contamination in Hidden Areas of Commercial Aircraft.

The FAA has established a Contamination/Aging Task Group under the auspices of the 'International Aircraft Materials Fire Test Working Group'. This Task Group's first activity is to survey as many airlines worldwide as possible to collect data relating to typical contaminant materials found in 'hidden areas' of commercial aircraft. Typically, contaminants include, among other things, corrosion inhibiting compounds (CIC's), hydraulic fluids, dust, lint, trash (general litter) and grease.

The term 'hidden areas' relates to parts of the pressurized aircraft cabin that are:

- a) Not readily accessible to members of flight or cabin crew while the aircraft is in flight, such that they could attempt fire fighting duties. Examples of these areas are the crown, cheek areas, EE bay, bilge, behind sidewall panels, etc.
- b) Not protected by a fire suppression system that would automatically operate in the event of a fire being detected (example – Class C cargo holds)

This survey is being undertaken in response to a series of 'inflight fires' that have occurred on commercial aircraft in airline service. Subsequent investigation has found that contamination of cabin or cargo hold furnishings and insulations by a range of materials had resulted in a degradation of the aircraft materials' flammability performance.

Once the survey has been completed, the most commonly occurring contaminants will be selected and samples of aircraft materials exhibiting such contamination will be collected for analysis and flammability testing.

The flammability test results will be summarized to help establish future design, manufacturing and operational, and maintenance procedures.

Attached to this covering letter is a copy of the 'FAA Airline Survey: Contamination of Hidden Areas in Aircraft' survey form.

Please fill in this form as appropriate for each aircraft type in your fleet and return to the FAA at the following address at your earliest convenience:

Pat Cahill
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All returned forms will be treated in strictest confidence and are only for the use of the FAA established Task Group.