



# Aeromedical Advisory

## The Future is Coming, and Soon...

Time and technology march on endlessly. But they also provide opportunities for change. When I originally announced MedXpress back in the spring of 2007, I explained that it was our intention to eventually make the entire process paperless, but we wanted to offer a transition time to give pilots the opportunity to get accustomed to an automated process. Well, that time of adjustment is ending soon. As you may have read, beginning October 1, 2012, pilots must use MedXpress to complete an electronic application for an Airman Medical and Student Pilot Certificate (FAA Form 8500-8).

Some people may object to this change on the grounds that the paper process works fine. It is important to understand, however, why this change is important for all of us. First, the paper process has many faults: it allows for too many errors; creates storage problems; and creates security risks. Also, the paper forms have occasionally been lost in the mail, and we are concerned that this poses unnecessary risks that the documents could be used inappropriately. In addition, to print, store, and distribute the paper Form 8500-8 costs more than \$150,000 a year. And these are only a few of the issues with the paper process.

In the “non-electronic” era, the paper form was the only way for pilots to provide us with their medical history. But poor handwriting, spelling errors, and items left blank left us with incomplete or incorrect records which could create issues for pilots. Attempts to correct these issues with new technology date back to our first electronic systems in 1992. Further electronic advances helped to alleviate some of the storage and retrieval issues. But Aviation Medical Examiners (AME) still had to dedicate resources to transfer histories into the new systems and the handwriting and spelling issues remained unsolved.

When we launched MedXpress in 2007, there was an end-to-end solution that solved most, if not all, of our common problems. MedXpress has proven to be an excellent tool. In fact, the only issue we have is that we need to increase its usage. But this is not something we are requiring only to allow the FAA

and AMEs to save money. There are benefits for you too, including a number of planned enhancements that will hopefully make the medical process easier, and that wouldn't be possible with the paper system.

One of the planned enhancements is to establish a tracking program that would allow pilots and AMEs to query the system to determine the status of medical applications. Another feature we would like to add is the ability to automatically forward the information that doesn't change, so that pilots don't have to reenter that information each time. We hope to start introducing new features in 2013.

We have made a great deal of progress toward our paperless goal since we originally announced it in January. I have talked about this project at aviation medical examiner seminars, and my deputy, Jim Fraser, talked about it at Sun n' Fun. Most of the feedback has been supportive, and we have received many suggestions that will help to make this initiative successful. We intend to continue to meet with pilots at AirVenture® in July to help explain the change and also to get additional feedback. We think this will be a change that can work for everyone, but we need your help to make it happen. So, if you're visiting Oshkosh in late July, please stop by and talk to me or any of the other members of the Office of Aerospace Medicine. Let us know how we can help with this transition, or with any other medical issue you might have. See you there.

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*Frederick E. Tilton, M.D., M.P.H., received both an M.S. and an M.D. degree from the University of New Mexico and an M.P.H. from the University of Texas. During a 26-year career with the U.S. Air Force, Dr. Tilton logged more than 4,000 hours as a command pilot and senior flight surgeon flying a variety of aircraft. He currently flies the Cessna Citation 560 XL.*

# Fast-track Your Medical Certificate

**With FAA MedXPress, you can get your medical certificate faster than ever before.**

Here's how: Before your appointment with your Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) simply go online to FAA MedXPress at <https://medxpress.faa.gov/> and electronically complete FAA Form 8500-8. Information entered into MedXPress will be available to your AME to review prior to and at the time of your medical examination, if you provide a confirmation number.

With this online option you can complete FAA Form 8500-8 in the privacy and comfort of your home and submit it before your appointment.

The service is free and can be found at:

<https://medxpress.faa.gov/>



**ATTENTION:**  
Beginning Oct. 1, 2012,  
pilots must use MedXpress  
to apply for a  
medical certificate.

