

(b) At a hub, essential air service is not usually specified as service to a particular airport.

§ 398.4 Equipment.

(a) Except in Alaska, service will be provided by aircraft offering at least 15 passenger seats, unless:

(1) Average daily enplanements at the place did not exceed 11 passengers for any fiscal year from 1976 through 1986;

(2) The requirement would necessitate the payment of compensation in a fiscal year for service at the place when compensation would otherwise not be necessary; or

(3) The affected community agrees in writing to the use of smaller aircraft to provide service at the place.

(b) The aircraft must have at least two engines and use two pilots, unless scheduled air transportation has not been provided to the place in aircraft with at least two engines and using two pilots for at least 60 consecutive operating days at any time since October 31, 1978.

(c) The aircraft must be pressurized when the service regularly involves flights above 8,000 feet in altitude.

(d) All aircraft must meet the applicable safety standards of the Federal Aviation Administration.

(e) The aircraft must be conveniently accessible to passengers by stairs rather than over the wing.

§ 398.5 Frequency of flights.

(a) Except in Alaska, at least two round trips each weekday and two round trips each weekend.

(b) In Alaska, a level of service at least equal to that provided in 1976, or two round trips each week, whichever is greater, except that the Department and the appropriate State authority of Alaska may agree to a different level of service after consulting with the affected community.

(c) An essential air service level may be set at more than that stated in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section if:

(1) Historical traffic data and studies of traffic-generating potential for the place indicate that more frequent service is needed to accommodate passengers and accompanying baggage with the aircraft used at that place;

(2) More flights are needed because the capacity available to the eligible place is being shared with traffic destined for an intermediate stop or for a place beyond the eligible place;

(3) More flights are needed to accommodate passengers because smaller aircraft are being used at the place;

(4) More flights are needed in order to ensure adequate connecting opportunities as provided for by § 398.7; or

(5) For Alaska, the appropriate state agency agrees that more frequent service is needed to accommodate cargo traffic with the aircraft used at the eligible place.

(d) For eligible places where traffic levels vary substantially with the season, a two-tier level of essential air service may be established with required flight frequencies changing accordingly.

§ 398.6 Seat guarantees.

(a) The number of seats guaranteed at the eligible place will be sufficient to accommodate the estimated passenger traffic at an average load factor of 60 percent, except that an average load factor of 50 percent will be used when service is provided with aircraft having fewer than 15 passenger seats.

(b) Only under unusual circumstances will an eligible place's essential air service level be set at a number of flights that will accommodate more than 40 passengers a day in each direction (a total of 80 inbound and outbound passengers). Generally, 40 passengers can be accommodated by guaranteeing 67 seats a day in each direction (a total of 134 inbound and outbound seats).

(c) The Department may guarantee an eligible place more than 67 seats a day if:

(1) The number of stops between or beyond the eligible place and the hub results in available aircraft capacity being shared with passengers at those other places;

(2) The distance between the eligible place and the designated hub requires the use of large aircraft;

(3) The eligible place has suffered an abrupt and significant reduction in its service that warrants a temporary increase in the maximum guaranteed capacity; or