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Medicals go paperless

 [Janice Wood](#) |  [Associations](#), [General Aviation News](#) |  15 hours ago

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Starting Oct. 1, all pilots will have to complete their applications for medicals online at FAA MedXPress.com.

When MedXPress was introduced in 2007, it was the FAA's intention to "eventually make the entire process paperless," according to Federal Air Surgeon Fred Tilton.

"We wanted to offer a transition time to give pilots the opportunity to get accustomed to automating the process," he said in the latest Federal Air Surgeon's Medical Bulletin. "While MedXPress has proven to be an excellent tool, we need to significantly increase its use."

While MedXPress is already used by "tens of thousands" of pilots each year, there are still some hold-outs. Tilton said it is important for these pilots to realize the many reasons behind the change.

"The paper system allows for too many errors, leads to storage problems and creates security risks," he said. "The paper form was the only way for pilots to provide us with their history in the 'non-electronic' age, but it was far from perfect. Poor handwriting, spelling errors, and items left blank gave us incomplete records and massive storage and retrieval issues. We corrected some of these problems when we introduced our first electronic system in 1992, but that system was voluntary for AMEs who were designated before its introduction, and we still had to contend with large amounts of paper records."

He noted that the paper 8500-8 form costs more than \$150,000 a year to print, store, distribute, and mail.

"On occasion, the paper forms have been lost in the mail, and we are concerned that this poses unnecessary risks that the documents could be used inappropriately," he noted.

The FAA plans some enhancements to the online process, including establishing a tracking program so that pilots and AMEs can go online to check the status of the applications.

"We also want to make the process easier on applicants by developing a feature that automatically transfers information that does not change so that the applicant is not required to re-enter information at subsequent examinations," Tilton said.

Officials at the Experimental Aircraft Association said they support the change, but are concerned that "a lack of education by the FAA to both pilots and AMEs will lead to confusion," said Sean Elliott, EAA vice president of industry and regulatory affairs.

EAA officials note that pilots may have some other concerns, including an unfamiliarity with

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online technology; worries about online security and access; and knowing at what point in time the online application becomes "official," and the applicant can no longer withdraw the application.

"EAA has resources that can help pilots who are not yet familiar with the MedXPress system, which is already used by tens of thousands of pilots each year," Elliott said.

A webinar, hosted by Dr. Greg Pinnell, who serves on the EAA Aeromedical Council, on how to use MedXPress, will be held Tuesday, Feb. 7, from 7-8 p.m. CST. You can register to attend [here](#).

For more information: [MedXPress.FAA.gov](#), [EAA.org](#)

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