A4A Bulletin

Bulletin 2019.1
Updated ATA103 Requirements for Filter Monitors
September 13, 2019

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Critical Items in This Bulletin:

- ***This bulletin provides advance notice of the upcoming release of ATA103 revision 2019.1, which will include a requirement to comply with the EI 1583 7th edition filter monitor standards, even after the withdrawal of EI 1583. Only those filter monitor elements currently qualified to meet EI 1583 7th edition will be permitted.***
- ***It is imperative that into-plane fueling providers continue strict adherence to the A4A Bulletin 2017.2 actions and the filter monitor operational parameters prescribed in ATA103.***
- ***Filter monitors will be phased out of the ATA103. This is an INTERIM decision to continue accepting EI 1583 7th edition monitor elements in the ATA103 beyond the specification withdrawal. Once more data is collected on new filtration technologies, a date for complete phase-out of filter monitor technology will be announced and included in the ATA103.***

In November 2017, the International Air Transportation Association (IATA) Super Absorbent Polymer (SAP) Special Interest Group announced its findings regarding SAP migration from Filter Monitors. The Group concluded that it was possible for SAP to migrate from filter monitors where it could pose a safety risk and recommended that they be phased out of aviation fuel handling systems. Since 2010, only a handful of incidents have been linked to SAP migration. Nevertheless, Airlines for America (A4A) member airlines strongly support the conclusion that there is no commercial aviation future for fuel filters containing SAP.

A4A Bulletin 2017.2 and A4A Bulletin 2018.1 outlined critical actions reducing the risk of SAP migration, applicable to sites operating to the ATA103 standard. The ATA103 user community is reminded that the actions outlined in those bulletins were fully incorporated into the 2017.2 revision of ATA103.

Over the last two years, the industry has worked to develop new filtration and/or sensing technology without SAP. However, those new technologies must demonstrate the same or better protection from dirt and water. A4A, together with IATA and the Joint Inspection Group (JIG), developed a rigorous evaluation process for new into-plane filtration technologies. This robust process is designed to evaluate whether the new technology meets the operational and safety needs of commercial aviation and does not introduce additional risk to the fueling process or to the aircraft.

Following the IATA Special Interest Group work, the Energy Institute (EI), who authors the into-plane fuel filter specifications, announced its intention to withdraw the filter monitor specification (EI 1583) at the end of 2020. Unfortunately, due to development delays by filter manufacturers, new into-plane filtration technology will not be ready and approved for use prior to the withdrawal of the EI specification. There is currently one other approved aviation fuel filter, EI 1581 Filter Water Separators. However, that technology has limitations, including potential for disarming when inadvertently exposed to trace contaminants and size/weight requirements which prevent its use in certain types of refueling equipment.

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The A4A member airlines, together with our global commercial aviation partners have carefully considered the IATA SAP Special Interest Group work and the notable, but still limited progress from filter manufacturers in the development of new into-plane filtration technology. Regardless of the reason a new technology is developed, the industry has a responsibility to thoroughly analyze new into-plane filtration technology. Due diligence and care must be taken to ensure new technology meets or exceeds the critical safety and operational demands of commercial aviation.

For the safety of the global aviation industry, we must take the necessary time to comprehensively evaluate new into-plane filtration technology and time to manage safe operational implementation of those technologies. Safety remains the number one priority for A4A and our member airlines. This unwavering commitment leads us to the continued use of filter monitors after the EI 1583 specification has been rescinded, until such time as a safe and effective global transition to new into-plane filtration technology is viable.

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A4A would like to reiterate that filter monitors have no future in commercial aviation and will be phased out. It is imperative that into-plane fueling providers continue strict adherence to the A4A Bulletin 2017.2 actions and the filter monitor operational parameters prescribed in ATA103.

Questions or requests for further information should be submitted to fuel@airlines.org

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