§ 135.615 VFR flight planning.

(a) *Pre-flight.* Prior to conducting VFR operations, the pilot in command must—

(1) Determine the minimum safe cruise altitude by evaluating the terrain and obstacles along the planned route of flight;

(2) Identify and document the highest obstacle along the planned route of flight; and

(3) Using the minimum safe cruise altitudes in paragraphs (b)(1)–(2) of this section, determine the minimum required ceiling and visibility to conduct the planned flight by applying the weather minimums appropriate to the class of airspace for the planned flight.

(b) *Enroute.* While conducting VFR operations, the pilot in command must ensure that all terrain and obstacles along the route of flight are cleared vertically by no less than the following:

(1) 300 feet for day operations.

(2) 500 feet for night operations.

(c) *Rerouting the planned flight path.* A pilot in command may deviate from the planned flight path for reasons such as weather conditions or operational considerations. Such deviations do not relieve the pilot in command of the weather requirements or the requirements for terrain and obstacle clearance contained in this part and in part 91 of this chapter. Rerouting, change in destination, or other changes to the planned flight that occur while the helicopter is on the ground at an intermediate stop require evaluation of the new route in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section.

(d) *Operations manual.* Each certificate holder must document its VFR flight planning procedures in its operations manual.

§ 135.617 Pre-flight risk analysis.

(a) Each certificate holder conducting helicopter air ambulance operations must establish, and document in its operations manual, an FAA-approved preflight risk analysis that includes at least the following—

(1) Flight considerations, to include obstacles and terrain along the planned route of flight, landing zone conditions, and fuel requirements;

(2) Human factors, such as crew fatigue, life events, and other stressors;

(3) Weather, including departure, en route, destination, and forecasted;

(4) A procedure for determining whether another helicopter air ambulance operator has refused or rejected a flight request; and

(5) Strategies and procedures for mitigating identified risks, including procedures for obtaining and documenting approval of the certificate holder's management personnel to release a flight when a risk exceeds a level predetermined by the certificate holder.

(b) Each certificate holder must develop a preflight risk analysis worksheet to include, at a minimum, the items in paragraph (a) of this section.

(c) Prior to the first leg of each helicopter air ambulance operation, the pilot in command must conduct a preflight risk analysis and complete the preflight risk analysis worksheet in accordance with the certificate holder's FAA-approved procedures. The pilot in command must sign the preflight risk analysis worksheet and specify the date and time it was completed.

(d) The certificate holder must retain the original or a copy of each completed preflight risk analysis worksheet at a location specified in its operations manual for at least 90 days from the date of the operation.

§ 135.619 Operations control centers.

(a) *Operations control center.* After April 22, 2016, certificate holders authorized to conduct helicopter air ambulance operations, with 10 or more helicopter air ambulances assigned to the certificate holder's operations specifications, must have an operations control center. The operations control center must be staffed by operations control specialists who, at a minimum—

(1) Provide two-way communications with pilots;

(2) Provide pilots with weather briefings, to include current and forecasted weather along the planned route of flight;

(3) Monitor the progress of the flight; and