



BILLING CODE 4910-13

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

[Docket No. FAA-2026-10264]

Notice of Availability, Notice of Public Comment Period, and Request for Comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Reentry Vehicle Operations in the Marine Environment

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), DOT Order 5610.1D, *DOT's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts*, and FAA Order 1050.1G, *FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures*, FAA is announcing the availability of and requesting comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Reentry Vehicle Operations in the Marine Environment (Draft PEA). FAA is also requesting comment on proposed new categorical exclusions (CATEXs) as described in and substantiated by the Draft PEA.

DATES: The public comment period for the Draft PEA will close on October 19, 2026.

ADDRESSES: The Draft PEA is available for public review at https://www.faa.gov/space/environmental/nepa_docs. Public comments can be submitted electronically to www.regulations.gov under Docket No. FAA-2026-10264, or by postal

mail to Nicholas Baker, FAA Environmental Protection Specialist, c/o ICF, 1902 Reston Metro Plaza, Reston, VA 20190. The Unique ID for this document is PEAX-012-12-000-1774526578.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information, visit https://www.faa.gov/space/environmental/nepa_docs or send an email to ReentryCapsulePEA@icf.com.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: FAA is the lead federal agency, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and U.S. Coast Guard are cooperating agencies. FAA has prepared this Draft PEA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with issuing vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits to commercial reentry vehicle operators, which would authorize reentry operations of vehicles in the marine environment. In addition to issuing a license or permit, FAA's federal actions include issuing airspace closures to ensure reentry operations are conducted safely. FAA intends to use this PEA to comply with its National Environmental Policy Act requirements for subsequent reviews of license or permit applications involving reentry operations in the marine environment, as well as to establish three new CATEXs, as described in the Draft PEA. The new CATEXs would be added to FAA Order 1050.1G, Appendix B-2.2 (Categorical Exclusions for Certification Actions). Concurrent with this public review period, FAA is consulting with the Council on Environmental Quality on its PEA and proposed CATEXs, in accordance with Section 1.4(b)(2) of FAA Order 1050.1G.

Proposed Categorical Exclusions

The first proposed CATEX is for *issuing* FAA vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits for reentry operations that are within the scope of operations described in Chapter 2, *Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives*, of the PEA. All FAA-licensed or -permitted reentry operations would occur within the study area analyzed in the PEA and the applicant's annual frequency of reentry operations would not exceed the cumulative number of annual FAA-licensed and -permitted reentries described in the PEA.

The second proposed CATEX is for *renewing* FAA vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits for reentry operations that are within the scope of operations described in Chapter 2, *Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives*, of the PEA. All FAA-licensed or -permitted reentry operations would occur within the study area analyzed in the PEA and the applicant's annual frequency of reentry operations would not exceed the cumulative number of annual FAA-licensed and -permitted reentries described in the PEA.

The third proposed CATEX is for *modifying* FAA vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits for reentry operations that are within the scope of operations described in Chapter 2, *Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives*, of the PEA. Such modifications might include new splashdown locations within the study area analyzed in the PEA or new expended or reused components within the type and frequency described in Chapter 2 of the PEA.

Basis for Establishing the Categorical Exclusions

FAA Order 1050.1G states FAA may establish a CATEX through a decision document supported by a programmatic environmental document that substantiates the FAA's conclusion that the category of actions analyzed in the programmatic environmental document does not have significant effects, individually or in the aggregate.

As described in the PEA and consistent with CEQ's guidance memorandum, *Establishing, Revising, Adopting, and Applying Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act* (April 9, 2026), FAA has analyzed previously implemented reentry operations in multiple environmental documents prepared in accordance with NEPA and determined there would not be significant impacts on the human environment. Each EA resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (refer to Appendix B of the PEA for a list of these EAs).

Public Disclosure Statement

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask the FAA in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, FAA cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Issued in Washington, DC on September 16, 2026.

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Operations Support Branch.

