

First of all, “What is a **Charter Flight?**”

A charter flight is one in which you hire a company or an organization to fly your group to a given destination. The company is required to provide you with properly certificated and maintained aircraft, flown by certificated crews who are legally trained, current, and proficient. In flight, the captain is in command. The company is responsible for observing all applicable Federal Aviation Regulations.

To legitimately engage in charter service, a company must be certificated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as an Air Carrier. Without an Air Carrier Certificate, no one may legally offer (advertise by **any** means) to provide public transportation of persons or property for hire. A charter flight differs from other commercial air services in that all or part of the cabin seats are reserved for a private group.

The charter operator’s Air Carrier Certificate requires operators to hold pilot qualifications, aircraft maintenance, and operating procedures to higher standards than for the non-certificated general aviation industry.

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Air Carrier Certificate

This certifies that

has met the requirements of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, as amended, and the rules, regulations, and standards prescribed thereunder for the issuance of this certificate and is hereby authorized to operate as an Air Carrier and conduct common carriage operations in accordance with said Act and the rules, regulations, and standards prescribed thereunder and the terms, conditions, and limitations contained in the approved operations specifications.

This certificate is not transferable and, unless sooner surrendered, suspended, or revoked, shall continue in effect indefinitely.

By Direction of the Administrator

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Certificate Number _____ | _____ |
| | (Signature) |
| Effective Date _____ | _____ |
| | (Title) |
| Issued At _____ | _____ |
| | (Region/Office) |

A sample of an actual air carrier certificate. Ask to see the original if you have any doubts.

There are hundreds of bona fide aviation companies certificated to offer charter flights. There are also companies or individuals who do not have air carrier certificates and who are willing, for the sake of profit, to risk the penalty of law by evading safety requirements. Before you take a charter flight, ask to see the operator’s FAA Air Carrier Certificate.

Now “What is a **Leased Aircraft?**”

In this case, the aircraft is turned over to you or your group for whatever purposes that are spelled out in the lease. Normally you'd be expected to service and fly the aircraft yourself, or to engage properly certificated personnel for those purposes. An important distinction is that **when you lease an aircraft for your use, you become the aircraft operator.**

When you lease, you do not need an Air Carrier Certificate, but you do need to know how to maintain and operate the aircraft in accordance with the regulations. The minimum safety standards for leased aircraft, with regard to aircraft maintenance and pilot proficiency, are not as strict or detailed as those required for charters, nor are they subject to many of the FAA inspections.

The intent of the regulations is to protect consumers by holding air charter service providers to higher safety standards than non-certificated aircraft operators.

Aircraft leasing is a common and thoroughly approved practice that is carried out by hundreds of legitimate organizations. Unfortunately, there are some irresponsible companies that may offer to “charter” you an aircraft, under the guise of providing lease service. They may use deceptive practices to confuse the issue as to who is to be the actual aircraft operator. One such practice is the pretense of a “lease”, whereby you are provided with an aircraft on a lease basis, although it is actually “serviced and flown” by the leasing company. Such an arrangement (depending upon the terms of the lease) could make you responsible for operating the aircraft, even though you do not intend to do this and have nothing to do with the flight other than indicating where and when you want to fly.

If the price is made attractively low, some groups seeking charter services may unknowingly enter into an evasively worded lease agreement. If you are tempted to do so, consider that if you accept what amounts to charter service from a company that is not certificated to operate charters, you may forego the protection of the higher

safety standards required by the FAA. You may also be violating many regulations.

If you have any doubt about the legitimacy of the air charter you're arranging, ask some specific questions, such as:

- “Are you certificated by the FAA as an Air Carrier?”
- “Would you provide me with a copy of your certificate?” or (if you are in the operator’s office) “May I see your original Air Carrier Certificate?”
- “Are you insured as required by the US Department of Transportation regulations, and would you provide me with a copy of your policy?”

If all this seems a bit cumbersome to you, to remove any doubts, check with your local FAA Flight Standards District Office; found online at WWW.FAA.GOV.

“A safe flight is planned on purpose.”



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Prepared as a public service by the
National FAA Team with special thanks
to the Kansas City Flight Standards
District Office

What if:

You, Your Company,
The School Athletic
Team, or any Social
Group planned to
Charter or Lease an
Aircraft?

Would you
know what
questions to ask?

