

New FAA rule mandates 25 hours of cockpit voice recordings

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has finalized a new rule that would require cockpit voice recorders (CVRs) on new passenger airplanes to retain 25 hours of cockpit audio recording, a major increase from the current two-hour recording loop.

The rule, finalized on Friday, takes effect immediately and will apply to all newly manufactured passenger aircraft from 2027. However, the FAA said some smaller aircraft categories will be given one to three years to comply with the updated requirement.

Cockpit voice recorders capture cockpit communications, pilot conversations, alarms, and other sounds such as engine noise. These recordings are crucial to investigate aviation incidents and accidents.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has been advocating for the expanded recording duration since 2018, arguing that the existing two-hour limit frequently results in crucial data being overwritten before investigators can retrieve it.

The United States has lagged behind global standards on this issue. Europe has required newly built commercial aircraft to record 25 hours of cockpit audio since 2021, aligning with a standard adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in 2016.

The FAA said the new rule will provide investigators, aircraft operators, and civil aviation authorities with “substantially more CVR data” to help identify safety risks and prevent future incidents.

In 2024, the US Congress separately passed legislation mandating that all existing passenger airplanes be retrofitted with 25-hour cockpit voice recorders by 2030.

Urgency for the change rose after a near-miss runway incident in 2023, when cockpit recordings from two aircraft were overwritten due to limited recording capacity.

The original NTSB recommendation followed a serious 2017 incident in San Francisco, where an Air Canada Airbus A320 nearly landed on a crowded taxiway, missing multiple aircraft by a narrow margin.

When cockpit voice recorders were first introduced in 1966, they were capable of recording only 30 minutes of audio.

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