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InFO

Information for Operators

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An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

Subject: SPOT, LLC (SPOT) Global Positioning System (GPS) Satellite Messenger Interference with GPS Position Information.

Purpose: This InFO provides awareness to Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 91 aircraft owners, operators, and pilots on the safe use of SPOT, LLC (SPOT) Global Positioning System (GPS) Satellite Messenger PEDs. It also reminds the flying public of existing Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, policy and guidance covering the safe use of PEDs on board aircraft.

Background: Aircraft operators notified the FAA of several instances of an intermittent loss of GPS position information. In these reports, the aircraft operators confirmed the use of a SPOT PED as the cause of the GPS interference.

Discussion: The SPOT Satellite Messenger PED transmits position information to a satellite communications network at user-selected intervals from 2.5 to 60 minutes. Aircraft pilots often place the SPOT PED on the aircraft glare shield and consequently, the device may transmit in close proximity to the aircraft's installed GPS antenna. Operators have identified this proximity as a contributor to the interference issue. Because the SPOT Satellite Messenger is a PED, aircraft operators, or pilots-in-command (PIC) are responsible for determining the safe use of this PED according to § 91.21.

SPOT is working cooperatively with the FAA to provide detailed information to its existing and future customers regarding the safe use of SPOT PEDs during aircraft operations. SPOT plans to include this updated information on its website, in its products quick start guide pamphlets, and in an email notification to its existing customers.

Recommended Action: The FAA recommends that aircraft operators and pilots flying under part 91 using a SPOT PED be aware of the potential for intermittent interference to installed GPS navigation equipment. This GPS interference also affects aircraft systems that rely on GPS position data, such as automatic dependent surveillance broadcast (ADS-B) systems. The operator or pilot-in-command shall determine that using a SPOT PED does not interfere with the navigation and communications systems prior to operating under instrument flight rules (IFR). Additionally, operators and pilots should exercise caution when using SPOT PEDs to ensure that it does not interfere with aircraft systems. Additional guidance on the use of PEDs aboard aircraft is available in FAA Advisory Circular 91.21-1D. Aircraft operators and PICs should review this guidance when considering the safe use of any PED on their aircraft.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the Aircraft Maintenance Division at (202) 267-1675.