

Identification and Comprehension of Symbolic Exit Signs for Small Transport Category Airplanes

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Global growth in travel has resulted in the need to standardize safety information and guidance systems for communication of significant information to the widest audience possible. Through uniform design and common visual components, persons in all countries can better recognize and follow directional information for safe passage, particularly in emergency situations. In order to communicate guidance information efficiently across language barriers, graphical signs and symbolic markings have come to incorporate a range of fairly standard visual components, such as exit signs that include arrows and the international running man symbol. A symbolic emergency exit sign has been approved for placement on a single, large transport category airplane type in place of the signs currently required by 14 CFR 25.811 and 25.812. Use of a similar symbolic exit sign has been proposed for deployment on a small transport airplane. This sign would be smaller and use variations of the approved symbols. This study evaluated the smaller symbolic exit sign, comparing it with the approved sign in combination with variations of individual sign elements. Overall, there was little difference in the identification of either the approved or proposed running man element, although participants were better able to identify the type of arrow element currently approved for the larger transport airplanes. The main recommendations from this study are that future symbolic exit signs on transport category airplanes be standardized and spaced within the cabin to provide the visual size needed for proper identification and comprehension.