

Facts About Contract Maintenance

- Under international law, the state of registry of an aircraft controls the maintenance. U.S.-registered aircraft and related engines, propellers, appliances and component parts of such aircraft [must be maintained by “persons” approved by the Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\)](#) (generally, [mechanics and repairmen, air carriers and repair stations](#)).
- It would be inconceivably expensive and inefficient for airlines to have all the technology and knowledge in-house to maintain every part of every aircraft. Repair stations are highly specialized, enabling a better return on investment in facilities, technology, training, etc.
- Repair stations help reduce maintenance costs while meeting the high safety standards required by air carriers and the aviation safety rules. The increased use of contract maintenance over the past several decades has coincided with [the safest period in the history of U.S. civil aviation](#).
- There are [4,024 FAA-certificated repair stations throughout the United States](#), approximately 80 percent of U.S. repair stations are small and medium-sized entities. U.S. repair stations employ approximately 255,000 Americans ([188,000 technicians](#) and 67,000 non-technical personnel). By comparison, there are [approximately 30,000 airline mechanics](#) in the United States.
- There are 931 FAA-certificated repair stations [outside the United States](#) that provide services to U.S. commercial and general aviation operators. Similarly, [more than 1,500 U.S. repair stations](#) are approved by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to work on EU-registered aviation products and articles. Many U.S. repair stations also hold approvals from other aviation authorities, allowing them to serve a global customer base.
- Whether inside or outside the United States, FAA-certificated repair stations must meet [the same certification standards](#), including having a repair station manual, a quality control manual, appropriate housing and facilities, a training program, appropriate equipment, personnel and technical data.
- All individuals working on U.S. registered aircraft and related articles, wherever located, work to [the same regulatory standards](#). When working for a U.S. air carrier, all persons must follow [the air carrier’s maintenance program](#). [Airlines are always responsible for airworthiness](#) and ensuring that, no matter who does it, maintenance is performed according to the airline’s maintenance program and FAA regulations. Airlines closely scrutinize and regularly audit their contract maintenance providers to ensure compliance.
- FAA rules prescribe specific [personnel requirements](#) for all repair stations (wherever they are located), including having a sufficient number of employees with training or knowledge and experience to ensure all work is performed in accordance with FAA standards. Repair stations are also required to have an [FAA-approved training program](#) to assess the abilities of all employees based on training, knowledge, experience or practical tests.
- While aviation maintenance professionals may hold FAA certificates allowing them to work and supervise under their own authority, most individuals working in the aviation sector in the United States are not required to be certificated. In fact, the whole point of a repair station or air carrier having authority to perform maintenance is that the company must ensure it employs [knowledgeable and capable personnel](#), regardless of whether the individual holds an FAA-issued mechanic certificate.
- While the FAA does not certificate mechanics outside the United States, the agency’s regulations prescribe parallel requirements for [supervisory personnel](#) and those authorized to [approve an article for return to service at foreign repair stations](#). For example, the latter must be trained in or have 18 months practical experience with the methods, techniques, practices, aids, equipment, and tools used to perform the work, be thoroughly familiar with FAA regulations, be proficient in the use of the various inspection methods, techniques, practices, aids, equipment, and tools appropriate for the work and understand, read, and write English.