

P. O. Box 60404
Potomac, Maryland 20859-0404

NORMAN UNDERSTEIN

March 21, 2003

Docket Management System
U.S. Department of Transportation
Room Plaza 401
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590-0001

SENT BY MAIL AND INTERNET

REF: Docket No. **FAA-2002-14081**; Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM):
No. 03-02
Transponder Continuous Operation for part 121 Air Carrier Operations

To Whom It May Concern:

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for this docket item was just brought to my attention today by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, in a Bulletin to its members dated March 20, 2002, reflecting their March 13, 2003 letter on this subject. To my knowledge, no prior notice was sent to its members asking their opinion on Docket No. FAA -2002-14081, and therefore, I believe, their response is not as a result of polling its members.

I have been a general aviation pilot for 40 years, based in Gaithersburg, Maryland, within 10 miles of Washington, D.C. September 11, 2001, evidences a real threat to the aviation community. For myself and those on the ground, I would much prefer having a system in my aircraft that irreversibly initiates an emergency signal indicating my plane has been hijacked, then reliance on the current transponder that can just be turned off, which would also reduce the tracking ability by ATC.

All aircraft are now equipped with an Emergency Locator Transmitter, to locate aircraft after an accident. When the ELT was first proposed, the initial reaction was that it would be cost prohibitive. Because the ELT became required, manufacturers developed systems that could be built and installed for hundreds of dollars, instead of thousands of dollars. This is most likely what will happen if the transponder as proposed in Docket FAA-2002-14081 is mandated. In comparison to the cost of the aircraft or the damage that a hijacked aircraft can cause, this is a small price to pay.

Very truly yours,

Norman Understein