

In March 2000, the FAA published a final rule requiring the installation of a terrain awareness and warning system (TAWS), also known as an enhanced ground proximity warning system (EGPWS) on all turbine aircraft configured to seat six or more passengers. Significantly, the final rule excludes turbine aircraft used in skydiving operations.

In August 1998, the FAA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking which proposed the installation of TAWS on all turbine aircraft certificated to seat six or more passengers. The NPRM cited several FAA-funded studies and several NTSB recommendations as the basis for the proposal. The studies concluded that TAWS would prevent or reduce a number of CFIT (controlled flight into terrain) accidents.

USPA, along with numerous general aviation organizations, submitted comments opposing the application to Part 91 (general aviation) operations, as well as the application to turbo-prop aircraft, as opposed to turbo-jet aircraft. USPA also urged the FAA to exempt skydiving aircraft, since skydiving operations are conducted in visual weather conditions, almost always over or near an airport.

While the final rule includes Part 91 operations, the FAA agreed that skydiving aircraft should be exempted. After summarizing the skydiving community's comments, the final rule states, "The FAA agrees with the commenters. Parachute and skydiving operations are unique in that operations are conducted under VFR conditions, in close proximity to the home field, with constant reference to the ground. The FAA has changed...the final rule to exclude airplanes when used for parachute operations and operated within 50 miles of the home airport." As a result, turbine jump plane operators will save from \$10,500 to \$12,500 per aircraft.

During the comment period, USPA issued an action call, urging DZ operators, jump aircraft operators, and skydivers to also submit comments in opposition to the proposal. Of over 200 comments received, the final rule relates that "approximately one-half of the comments were from individuals associated with parachute operations." USPA extends thanks to those that actively helped defeat what would have been a very costly rule for skydiving, with no safety benefit.