

FCC Bans 121.5 ELTs

The Federal Communications Commission took the general aviation world by surprise when it said in a recent [report](#) it will prohibit the sale or use of 121.5 MHz emergency locator transmitters, effective in August. The [Aircraft Electronics Association said](#) it just learned of the new rule today, and has begun working with the FAA, FCC and others to allow for timely compliance without grounding thousands of general aviation aircraft. The 121.5 ELTs are allowed under FAA rules. The FCC said its rules have been amended to "prohibit further certification, manufacture, importation, sale or use of 121.5 MHz ELTs." The FCC says that if the 121.5 units are no longer available, aircraft owners and operators will "migrate" to the newer 406.0-406.1 MHz ELTs, which are monitored by satellite, while the 121.5 frequency is not. "Were we to permit continued marketing and use of 121.5 MHz ELTs ... it would engender the risk that aircraft owners and operators would mistakenly rely on those ELTs for the relay of distress alerts," the FCC says. AOPA [said today](#) it is opposed to the rule change.

"The FCC is making a regulatory change that would impose an extra cost on GA operators, without properly communicating with the industry or understanding the implications of its action," said AOPA Vice President of Regulatory Affairs Rob Hackman. "There is no FAA requirement to replace 121.5 MHz units with 406 MHz technology. When two government agencies don't coordinate, GA can suffer." The AEA said dealers should refrain from selling any new 121.5 MHz ELTs "until further understanding of this new prohibition can be understood and a realistic timeline for transition can be established."