



FAA Proposes Five Commercial Space Launch Rule Changes: Lightning, Blast, Flight Safety and Containment Rules Open for Comment Through November 4

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On October 5, 2026 the Federal Aviation Administration published five proposed rules to streamline its Part 450 commercial space launch and reentry licensing regulations, covering lightning hazard mitigation, far-field blast analysis, flight safety analysis, physical containment and electronic filing. Comments are due November 4, 2026.

The Federal Aviation Administration published five separate proposed rules in the Federal Register on October 5, 2026, each amending its commercial space launch and reentry licensing regulations at 14 CFR part 450. All five carry the same comment deadline: November 4, 2026.

The FAA says the package carries out Executive Order 14335, "Enabling Competition in the Commercial Space Industry," issued August 13, 2025, which directed the Secretary of Transportation to "reevaluate, amend, or rescind" the Part 450 rules. Part 450 itself consolidated launch and reentry licensing in a final rule issued December 10, 2020, effective March 10, 2021.

The five proposals

- Lightning hazard mitigation (Docket FAA-2026-9940, Notice 26-18): an exception to 14 CFR 450.163(a). An operator would not have to use a listed lightning mitigation method for descending phases of flight if, once the vehicle descends to an altitude where lightning is foreseeable, its flight path is clear of members of the public and critical assets.

- Overpressure blast effects (Docket FAA-2026-9941, Notice 26-19): a far-field overpressure blast effects analysis would not need to account for members of the public in hypothetical locations.
- Flight safety analysis methodology (Docket FAA-2026-9936, Notice 26-23): consolidates the information an applicant must submit for its flight safety analysis.
- Physical containment (Docket FAA-2026-9934, Notice 26-22): when an operator uses physical containment as its hazard control strategy, it would not need to develop flight hazard areas under the existing flight hazard area analysis requirements.
- Digital modernization (Docket FAA-2026-9935, Notice 26-25): allows license and permit applications, waiver requests, alternative time frames and safety element approval requests to be submitted through additional electronic methods.

Why launch communities should read them

These are licensing rules, not launch approvals. But they shape how operators show the FAA that people on the ground, on the water and in the air are protected. The blast-effects and flight-hazard-area changes go directly to how the public near launch and reentry sites is counted in safety analysis. People who live near Cape Canaveral, Vandenberg, Wallops, the Texas Gulf Coast spaceports, Mojave and other licensed sites have a stake in that.

How to comment

- Comments go to regulations.gov under each docket number above, or by mail, hand delivery or fax to DOT Docket Operations, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.
- Each proposal is a separate docket. A comment on one does not count for the others.
- Deadline for all five: November 4, 2026.

Sources

1. Federal Register, Oct. 5, 2026, Doc. 2026-20391, Lightning Hazard Mitigation Burden-Reducing Exception. <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20391>
2. Federal Register, Oct. 5, 2026, Doc. 2026-20392, Overpressure Blast Effects Analysis Burden Reducing Clarification. <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20392>
3. Federal Register, Oct. 5, 2026, Doc. 2026-20388, Streamlining Flight Safety Analysis Methodology Means of Compliance. <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20388>
4. Federal Register, Oct. 5, 2026, Doc. 2026-20386, Simplifying Physical Containment Requirements. <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20386>
5. Federal Register, Oct. 5, 2026, Doc. 2026-20387, Digital Modernization for Licensing Electronic Application Submissions. <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20387>

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Notes

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