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FAA Part 135 Operator List: A PE Target Mapping Guide

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In this article

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction and Background
3. Key Changes in the FAA Lookup Landscape
4. The Three Objects: Brand, Certificate Holder and Aircraft
5. Building the Crosswalk and Evidence Ladder
6. Implementation Considerations and Process Changes
7. Data Analysis and Evidence
8. Implications and Future Directions
9. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
10. Conclusion

Executive Summary

The **FAA Part 135 operator list** is a downloadable spreadsheet that FAA says verifies "whether an operator is certificated for charter" and which aircraft are authorized for charter (www.faa.gov). A companion route, the AVInfo Air Operator Search, covers operator and doing-business-as (DBA) names, and FAA said at its September 2026 update that it was working on merging the two. This report examines how a private equity (PE) origination analyst should use these tools to decide which legal entity is involved in a charter brand, not whether to fly with anyone.

The central finding is that three objects are routinely conflated: a **marketing brand or DBA**, the **legal Part 135 certificate holder**, and the **aircraft authorized for charter**. Federal rules let a holder operate only under a business name listed in its operations specifications (www.law.cornell.edu), and FAA guidance identifies OpSpec D085 as the authorization for specific aircraft by registration number (FAA AC 135-44). FAA's congressional study notes that operators often contract with owners to use owner aircraft under the operator's certificate, so a tail number proves authorization, not ownership, fleet control or parent control.

Public counts differ by source and date, so they are ranges, not a census. The NTSB cited about **1,850** holders operating about **11,760** aircraft in 2024 (www.ntsb.gov), and FAA's own Safe Air Charter page shows undated headline figures of the same magnitude. That is about 6.3 aircraft rows per holder, so a denominator waterfall (raw rows, unique certificate holders, reviewed in-scope operators, unresolved cases) must never report aircraft as companies. FAA's study also states that operators do not report revenue data, so size and revenue must come from other evidence.

Version control matters. Each extract should carry a retrieval date, a file hash and a weekly-delta log. A nonmatch is a prompt to contact a Flight Standards District Office (FSDO), as FAA instructs, not evidence of any status. This run could not parse the spreadsheet's column schema, so the schema must be inspected at capture time. The DOT carrier list (www.transportation.gov) lists certificated air carriers and the types of authority held, and DOT says its economic authority is separate from FAA safety authority (www.transportation.gov).

Introduction and Background

Part 135 of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs "The commuter or on-demand operations of each person who holds or is required to hold" an air carrier or operating certificate (www.law.cornell.edu). In plain terms, it is the rulebook behind US charter and air-taxi companies. For a PE origination team, the practical question is narrower than a safety question: does a candidate company belong in a US Part 135 universe, which legal entity holds the certificate, and is a claim about a DBA or an aircraft supported by a dated public record?

This report is an identity and authorization screen. It is not safety due diligence, it does not evaluate any operator, and it is not a recommendation to charter with anyone. Worked examples use fictional records, and every hypothetical is labelled. Volatile facts are anchored to the dates on the source pages, with October 20, 2026 as the publication date.

The consumer-facing lookups are built for travelers and brokers. AVWeb reported on May 11, 2026 that FAA's updated Safe Air Charter resource offers "a direct way to verify whether a charter company is legally authorized to conduct commercial flights" (avweb.com), and NATA called the updated list "an important tool for operators, brokers, customers, and industry stakeholders" (nata.aero). Those audiences ask whether a company is authorized; the Air Charter Safety Foundation's first step in checking a flight is to "Confirm the operator is legally authorized under FAA Part 135 regulations." (acsf.aero) A PE analyst asks a different question: how many distinct companies exist, who controls them, and which brand names merge into one legal entity. None of the FAA pages we retrieved documents a parent-company field, which is where double-counting enters.

Sector context explains the interest. The Middle Market reported in August 2026 that rising passenger volumes, growing business aviation activity and "a highly fragmented competitive landscape" are drivers of aviation services deal activity (www.themiddlemarket.com). Fragmentation is visible in the data: FAA's 2024 safety management systems rule estimated 1,848 Part 135 operators would be affected (www.federalregister.gov), and NBAA told FAA in 2023 that of almost 2,000 Part 135 certificate holders, over 800 were single pilot-in-command, single pilot or basic operators (nbaa.org). Many small holders, many brand names and many shared aircraft arrangements are exactly where an identity-first approach pays off.

Docket, the publisher of this report, provides sourced acquisition-target research for private equity teams. This report is general methodology; it names no client, no engagement and no real target list.

Key Changes in the FAA Lookup Landscape

The weekly spreadsheet and the AVInfo route

FAA publishes two public routes. The Part 135 Operators and Aircraft List is searchable by operator name or by aircraft registration number (www.faa.gov), and FAA labels it "Updated weekly" (www.faa.gov). The AVInfo Air Operator Search is described as a way to search by operator name or DBA name, "to verify charter authorization and find additional operator information" (www.faa.gov). The page was last updated on Wednesday, September 2, 2026 (www.faa.gov).

Two cautions apply. The page date is not the data date of the spreadsheet; the page text we retrieved gives no day of the week and no data-as-of field. And FAA says it is "working on merging these two resources together" (www.faa.gov), so the retrieval route may change. A pipeline should record the URL, the retrieval timestamp and a cryptographic hash of the file, not rely on the page stamp.

AVInfo scope is wider than Part 135

The AVInfo Air Operator 14 CFR Search is not a Part 135 tool. FAA's page says the search includes "14 CFR parts 91" and several others (www.faa.gov). At the data-category level, DOT maintains its own, separate list of certificated air carriers (www.transportation.gov). A record pulled from the generic search must therefore be filtered to Part 135 before it enters a charter universe.

Schema: not assumed, not verified in this run

A team should open the current download and inspect its columns before building on it. In this run, automated retrieval of the workbook returned non-text bytes, so we did not read the live header row, and FAA's page text documents no column dictionary. What can be said is limited to a third-party description of the 2025 file: it includes the certificate holder name and the fields Certificate Designator, FAA District Office, Aircraft Registration Number and Aircraft Serial Number (privatejetcardcomparisons.com). That description is dated and secondary, so it is a hypothesis to test. The crosswalk below is schema-agnostic: it stores the raw value of every field the live file exposes.

The Three Objects: Brand, Certificate Holder and Aircraft

Scope: what a Part 135 universe excludes

Part 119 applies to operators acting "As an air carrier or commercial operator, or both, in air commerce" (www.law.cornell.edu). Adjacent categories look similar in search results but are different records:

- **Part 91 operations:** the general operating rules, including fractional ownership program aircraft that operate under subpart K (www.law.cornell.edu).
- **Part 121 carriers:** FAA safety authorization and DOT economic authority are separate records (DOT).
- **Part 125 operators:** large aircraft with "a seating configuration of 20 or more passengers or a maximum payload capacity of 6,000 pounds or more" when common carriage is not involved (www.ecfr.gov).
- **Part 129 operators:** "Foreign air carrier operations in the United States." (www.law.cornell.edu)
- **Part 133 operations:** rotorcraft external-load work, which Part 119 excludes along with Part 375 operations (www.ecfr.gov).
- **Part 137 operators:** "Agricultural aircraft operations within the United States" (www.ecfr.gov).

Within Part 135, FAA distinguishes air carrier certificates from intrastate operating certificates, and a holder with commuter authority can also conduct on-demand operations, so commuter and on-demand counts can overlap rather than add. DOT adds that its economic authority "is separate from the safety authority" (www.transportation.gov), and 14 CFR 119.5 bars operating "without holding appropriate economic authority from the Department of Transportation" (www.law.cornell.edu).

The legal certificate holder and its DBAs

The legal Part 135 holder is the entity named on the certificate. Under 14 CFR 119.7, "operations specifications are not a part of a certificate" (with a narrow exception for the paragraph identifying authorized kinds of operations) (www.ecfr.gov), so business names live in a separate document. Section 119.49 requires the specifications to list "Other business names under which the certificate holder may operate" (www.law.cornell.edu), and section 119.9 allows operation only under a business name that appears in the holder's specifications (www.law.cornell.edu). Section 119.5 also bars anyone from advertising an operation subject to Part 119 without FAA authorization (www.ecfr.gov).

The practical consequence is that a DBA is a documented alias of one legal holder, not a separate company. Section 119.9 also requires the aircraft to display the name or certificate number of the holder operating it (www.ecfr.gov). The certificate number, or the designator in the FAA list, is therefore the most stable join key; names are the least stable.

Aircraft authorization is an operating fact, not an ownership fact

For domestic, flag and commuter operations, section 119.49(a)(4) requires aircraft type, registration markings and serial numbers. For on-demand operations, section 119.49(c)(6) ties those identifiers to aircraft subject to the maintenance program required by section 135.411(a)(2); section 119.49(c)(7) separately requires registration markings for aircraft inspected under section 135.419 (14 CFR 119.49). FAA guidance identifies OpSpec D085 as the authorization for specific aircraft by registration number (FAA AC 135-44). NBAA's broker guidance says the D085 listing "is the method used by the FAA" to track which aircraft a carrier may operate (nbaa.org). But authorization is not ownership. The FAA Aircraft Registry records the owner of record: registration requires "the name of the owner" (www.faa.gov). FAA's 2016 report to Congress observed that operators "often will contract with aircraft owners to utilize an aircraft under their certificate" (www.faa.gov), and NBAA's leasing guide describes "Contracting to allow the aircraft to be placed on an air" carrier's certificate (nbaa.org).

Three consequences follow for a crosswalk. First, the registry owner and the certificate holder can legitimately differ. Second, "These aircraft can appear on more than one certificate" (www.faa.gov), so row counts exceed unique tails. Third, exclusive use is an operational-control concept: a Part 135 holder must have "sole possession, control, and use of it for flight" for at least one aircraft (www.ecfr.gov), and operational control is "the exercise of authority over initiating, conducting or terminating a flight." (www.ecfr.gov) Not every aircraft on a list is an exclusive-use aircraft, so no inference about fleet control follows from a listing.

Brokers, managers and the brand layer

Many public brands are not certificate holders. DOT regulations define air charter brokers as "an indirect air carrier, foreign indirect air carrier or a bona fide agent" (www.law.cornell.edu), and DOT guidance says brokers without economic authority "must act either as an agent of the direct air carrier" or of the customer (www.transportation.gov). DOT consumer guidance adds that "the company operating the flight is an airline" (www.transportation.gov). NBAA's best-practices guide states that a direct air carrier is "licensed to and does physically operate aircraft, whereas an" indirect air carrier is not (nbaa.org), and that brokers cannot influence

"operational decisions that only the direct air carrier can" make (nbaa.org). Under DOT's rules, a direct air carrier "has control over the operational functions performed in providing that transportation" (www.law.cornell.edu).

Aircraft management companies add a second layer. NBAA told FAA in 2023 that "it is common for an aircraft flown entirely under Part 91 to utilize the management and" services of a certificate holder (nbaa.org), and Business Jet Traveler notes that aircraft on a charter certificate "may and often do operate under Part 91 rules" when no paying passengers are aboard (bjtonline.com). A management company, a broker, a brand and a certificate holder can therefore all appear in marketing copy for one flight. The mapping task is to label each edge honestly. FAA Advisory Circular 120-12A adds that a carrier "holding itself out as generally willing to carry only certain kinds of traffic is, nevertheless, a common carrier" (www.faasafety.gov), which is why brand-level holding out and certificate-level authority are separate questions; the circular lists "four elements in defining a common carrier" (www.faasafety.gov).

Building the Crosswalk and Evidence Ladder

The crosswalk structure

The reference asset is a **holder / DBA / aircraft crosswalk**: a table in which every row is one edge between two objects, with its source, snapshot date and evidence. No merge is silent. Each edge records the raw value as received, the normalized value, the evidence tier and the reviewer. *Table 1* below shows the layout using fictional records.

Edge ID	Source and snapshot	FAA list row (raw)	Legal holder (raw / normalized)	DBA or brand	Aircraft (N-number)	Proposed parent	Evidence tier and note
E-001	FAA spreadsheet, retrieved 2026-10-19 (Hypothetical Example)	Row 214	ALPHA EXAMPLE AVIATION LLC / Alpha Example Aviation	Alpha Jets (listed in AVInfo as DBA)	N-EX01	None proposed	Tier 1: holder and aircraft on FAA list; DBA from AVInfo
E-002	FAA spreadsheet, same snapshot (Hypothetical Example)	Row 215	ALPHA EXAMPLE AVIATION LLC	Alpha Jets	N-EX02	None proposed	Tier 1: same holder, second aircraft
E-003	Company website, retrieved 2026-10-19 (Hypothetical Example)	No row	Not found	Beta Sky Charter	N-EX03 (advertised)	Unknown	Tier 6: brand not matched; escalate for review
E-004	FAA spreadsheet plus state filing (Hypothetical Example)	Row 590	GAMMA EXAMPLE AIR INC / Gamma Example Air	Gamma Executive	N-EX04	Delta Example Holdings (proposed)	Tier 5: parent from state filing, not FAA

Edge ID	Source and snapshot	FAA list row (raw)	Legal holder (raw / normalized)	DBA or brand	Aircraft (N-number)	Proposed parent	Evidence tier and note
E-005	FAA spreadsheet, prior week snapshot (Hypothetical Example)	Row 102 (prior), none (current)	EPSILON EXAMPLE LLC	Epsilon Air	N-EX05	None proposed	Tier 1 prior only; log as delta, do not delete

Table 1 illustrates three rules. First, an N-number attaches to a holder, never directly to a brand; E-001 and E-002 share one holder through two aircraft. Second, an unmatched brand (E-003) is retained as an unresolved record with its source, not discarded and not assumed to be anything. Third, a parent company (E-004) is a proposal that needs ownership evidence from outside the FAA, because FAA describes its list as verifying certificated operators and authorized aircraft, not corporate control. A row that drops out of the next weekly file (E-005) is logged as a delta.

The evidence ladder for joining a brand to a holder

A brand should be joined to a legal holder only by climbing an explicit ladder, strongest first:

1. **Operator-identified certificate:** the operator itself discloses its air carrier or operating certificate number or designator.
2. **FAA DBA match:** the brand appears as a DBA for the holder in the AVInfo search.
3. **Aircraft display match:** the aircraft carries the name or certificate number of the holder operating it, as section 119.9 requires (www.ecfr.gov).
4. **Contractual disclosure:** a broker or seller states the corporate name and any DBA of the "air carrier in operational control of the flight(s)" before contracting (nbaa.org).
5. **Corporate registry link:** a state filing links the brand name to the same legal entity (outside the FAA record).
6. **Web copy only:** a brand name and a claim on a site, with no corroboration. This tier never merges by itself.

Joining at tier 6 is how brand double-counting happens, because one legal entity can market under multiple names and two brands can share an aircraft arrangement. The ladder also guards against the opposite error, splitting one entity into several.

Grouping by state

A frequent query is a Part 135 operator list by state. FAA documents search by operator name or N-number and no state filter in the page text we retrieved. What exists in public rules is the principal base: section 119.49 requires the specifications to include "The specific location of the certificate holder" principal base (www.ecfr.gov). State grouping is therefore a derived field, built from the principal base or address when the file exposes one, or from the FAA district office column described by a third party. A principal base is a regulatory anchor, not a service area, so state tallies measure where a certificate is based, not where it flies.

Two-way lookup checklists

Name search and N-number search answer different questions, and each should be run in both directions before an edge is accepted.

Name-to-aircraft (starting from a brand or legal name):

- Search the spreadsheet by operator name and record every row returned, with the raw string.
- Search AVInfo by operator name and by DBA name, and record the DBA list.
- Filter AVInfo to Part 135 only, since the tool spans several parts.
- For each holder returned, list all N-numbers and count unique tails versus rows.
- Record misspellings, suffix changes (LLC, Inc.) and punctuation differences as aliases; never overwrite the raw string.
- If nothing is returned, write "no match in snapshot dated X" and stop; do not infer status.

N-number-to-holder (starting from a tail number):

- Search the spreadsheet by registration number and record every holder listed, since a tail can appear on more than one certificate.
- Look up the registry owner of record separately; the N-number inquiry is updated each federal working day (registry.faa.gov), so its date differs from the weekly list.
- Compare the registry owner to the holder; treat a difference as normal and note it.
- If the tail is absent, check the prior weekly snapshot before escalating, because rows can drop out between versions.
- Record the serial number if the file exposes it, since a re-registered aircraft can carry a new N-number.

Implementation Considerations and Process Changes

The denominator waterfall

The most common reporting error is calling an aircraft count a company count. FAA's headline figures show why: its Safe Air Charter page lists 1,837 certificate holders (www.faa.gov) against 11,582 authorized aircraft (www.faa.gov). A denominator waterfall makes the transformation explicit. *Table 2* shows an illustrative waterfall built on a fictional 500-row extract.

Step	Count (Hypothetical Example)	Rule applied	What the number means
1. Raw rows in snapshot	500	Count every data row as retrieved	Holder-aircraft pairs, not companies
2. Rows after removing blank or exact-duplicate lines	494	Remove only rows with no values or identical in every field	Cleaned rows, still pairs
3. Unique certificate designators	71	Group by the certificate identifier field	Candidate certificate holders

Step	Count (Hypothetical Example)	Rule applied	What the number means
4. After alias consolidation	69	Merge records proven to be one holder (evidence tier 1 or 2)	Unique legal holders
5. Reviewed and in scope	58	Apply the mandate filter (for example on-demand passenger charter)	In-scope operators for the universe
6. Excluded after review	7	Out of mandate, documented reason per row	Mandate exclusion only
7. Unresolved	4	Evidence insufficient to classify	Open items for human review

Table 2 makes three points. The ratio of rows to unique holders (494 to 69, or about 7.2) must be stated beside any fleet statistic, and it is of the same order as the roughly 6.3 ratio in public counts. Steps 3 and 4 differ because alias merging is a judgment, so the count before merging should be preserved. And steps 5 to 7 sum to the post-merge total (58 plus 7 plus 4 equals 69), a reconciliation that should be asserted in code on every run.

The weekly-delta log template

A weekly diff is a standing control. A minimal log keeps these fields for each change:

- **Snapshot dates:** prior and current retrieval timestamps, plus a file hash for each.
- **Change type:** added holder, removed holder, renamed holder, added aircraft, removed aircraft, DBA change.
- **Raw before and after:** the exact strings, unaltered.
- **Edge ID:** the crosswalk edge affected.
- **Net aircraft rows:** the weekly change in raw rows.
- **Reviewer and disposition:** accepted rename, pending, or escalated.
- **Mass-change flag:** raise it when a large share of rows changes in one week, and pause automated merges until the cause is understood.

A renamed holder shows up as one removal plus one addition. The log should propose the pairing, using the designator and aircraft overlap, but require review before the edge moves.

Missing records and FSDO escalation

FAA's instruction is explicit: if an operator or aircraft is not listed, "contact your local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) to verify charter status" (www.faa.gov). In an analytic workflow, a nonmatch therefore has exactly one correct disposition: **unverified in this snapshot, escalate to a human**. It is not evidence that an operation is unauthorized. Reasons for a nonmatch are mundane: a naming difference, a recent change, a file in transition, or a different regulatory category. The escalation should be logged as a human step with a date, the question asked and the answer received.

A second control compares sources when a holder or aircraft is missing or renamed: the prior weekly snapshot, then AVInfo by name and DBA, then the registry for the N-number, then the FSDO. Because the spreadsheet and AVInfo are separate routes, disagreement between them is possible and should be recorded, not resolved by guesswork.

An identity and authorization checklist (a Part 135 due diligence screen)

For each candidate, the screen asks only identity and authorization questions:

- **Entity:** is the legal holder name captured exactly, with its designator, and is each alias linked rather than overwritten?
- **Scope:** is the record Part 135, on-demand or commuter, and not Part 91, 121, 125, 129, 133 or 137?
- **Certificate type:** air carrier or operating certificate?
- **Aircraft:** which N-numbers are on the dated list, and how many unique tails versus rows?
- **Ownership:** has the registry owner of record been captured separately and labelled as owner, not operator?
- **Brand layer:** is each public brand tagged as DBA, broker, manager or unknown?
- **Economic authority:** where relevant, is DOT authority recorded as a separate fact?
- **Open items:** is every unresolved edge listed with the next human action?

This checklist deliberately excludes safety assessment. Authorization on a list is a status fact; it is neither an endorsement nor a ranking of any operator.

Data Analysis and Evidence

Counts by source and date

Published counts differ because they come from different originators, dates and definitions. *Table 3* lines them up, naming the originator in each row and showing the publisher of this report as a workflow layer, not a data source.

Source (originator)	As-of date	Certificate holders	Aircraft	Definition note
FAA report to Congress (www.faa.gov)	October 2012	2,155 operators	10,655 total	Aircraft counted per certificate; can appear on more than one
NBAA comments to FAA (nbaa.org)	April 2023	"almost 2,000"	Not stated	Over 800 single PIC, single pilot or basic
FAA final rule on safety management systems (Federal Register) (www.federalregister.gov)	April 2024	1,848 operators affected by the rule	Not stated	Regulatory-impact count, not a certificate census
NTSB safety report (www.ntsb.gov)	July 2024	About 1,850	About 11,760 (www.ntsb.gov)	Industrywide figure for 2024

Source (originator)	As-of date	Certificate holders	Aircraft	Definition note
Private Jet Card Comparisons (third-party count of the FAA file) (privatejetcardcomparisons.com)	September 2025	Not stated	11,323	Count after the September 17, 2025 file
FAA Safe Air Charter page	Undated (retrieved 2026-10-20)	1,837	11,582	Official headline figures; no as-of date shown
Docket (publisher of this report)	Not applicable	Not a data source	Not a data source	Research workflow (Triage, Scout, Audit) that screens, sources and checks entities against records such as those above; it is not an authoritative record

Several conclusions follow from *Table 3*. The holder count fell about 14 percent from 2,155 in 2012 to about 1,850 in 2024, while the aircraft count rose about 10 percent from 10,655 to about 11,760 (both computed from the cited figures). Fewer holders with more aircraft implies a rising average, from roughly 4.9 aircraft rows per holder in 2012 to about 6.3 to 6.4 in 2024 and 2026 (2,155 and 10,655; 1,850 and 11,760; 1,837 and 11,582). The definitions are not identical across sources, so these ratios describe order of magnitude only. The undated FAA headline is the weakest for time-series work, because without an as-of date it cannot be placed in a series.

Fleet-size data sources and what is not published

FAA's 2016 study found that in 2002 and 2012 most operators had "one or two aircraft, while less than ten percent of the operators had more than ten aircraft" (www.faa.gov). NTSB reported that "About 550 Part 135 certificate holders" are single-pilot or single-PIC operators (www.ntsb.gov), which is roughly 30 percent of 1,850. NBAA's 2023 statement implies roughly 40 percent or more of holders in the small categories (nbaa.org). These are old or secondary figures, and no current FAA tabulation of fleet size by holder was found in this research. A team can compute its own distribution from the weekly file (aircraft rows per unique designator), with the caveat that rows are not unique tails.

What public records do not publish matters as much for a PE screen. FAA's study says "Part 135 operators do not report revenue data to FAA or DOT." (www.faa.gov) The aircraft list gives authorization, not flight hours, revenue, utilization or route activity. Fleet size by operator is therefore best sourced from the dated list, and every other commercial metric must come from separate evidence.

Adjacent official datasets and their update cadences

Mapping often combines the list with other federal sources. The FAA Aircraft Registry's online N-number inquiry updates each federal working day at midnight, and its downloadable database follows a daily cycle of its own. The mismatch with the weekly operator list means a registry change can appear days before or after the corresponding list change. DOT's carrier list was last updated on July 13, 2026 (www.transportation.gov)

and covers "addresses, phone numbers, and type of authority held" (www.transportation.gov). That list answers an economic-authority question; it does not replace the separate FAA safety-authority check for Part 135 or Part 121 (DOT).

Third-party aggregators

Commercial aggregators republish FAA data. AviationDB, for example, states its data "is continually updated once a month or more often as new data becomes available" (www.aviationdb.com) and warns "In no event should this data be used for flight operations" (www.aviationdb.com). Those are vendor statements, not independent measurements, and the refresh cadence can lag the weekly FAA file. For an evidence-grade record, the primary FAA file and a dated copy are preferable to a mirror.

Implications and Future Directions

For origination teams, **identity resolution is the work**, and the list is a starting input. A universe built from brand names will overcount, because DBAs, brokers and managers multiply brand-level records. A universe built from aircraft rows will overcount by roughly a factor of six. A universe built from unique certificate holders, with brand and aircraft edges attached, can be reconciled against public counts and tracked weekly.

Several uncertainties should be stated in any deliverable. FAA says the spreadsheet and AVInfo may merge, which could change the route, the file format and the schema. FAA is also changing how initial applications are processed, which may eventually affect data timing. Neither change is a reason to wait, but both justify schema checks that fail loudly when a header changes.

Some limits no amount of cleaning removes. Authorization does not reveal aircraft ownership, parent control, revenue, route activity or acquisition relevance. Because owner aircraft under a certificate are common, a large listed fleet may be largely owner-supplied, and a holder with a small authorized fleet can be significant for reasons that never appear in a public list. Nothing here replaces legal review: questions about operational control, certificate transfers, or whether a specific arrangement is permissible belong with aviation counsel and the local FSDO, and this report was not reviewed by a lawyer.

Three practices follow: keep immutable, hashed snapshots; keep raw values beside normalized ones; and treat every merge as a reviewable edge with a tier. These steps turn a lookup tool into an auditable market map.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Where is the FAA Part 135 operator list, and how often does it update? FAA hosts a downloadable Part 135 Operators and Aircraft List and a separate AVInfo search, each documented as updated weekly.

How do I find Part 135 certificate holders by state? The page text does not document a state filter. Derive state from the principal base of operations (www.ecfr.gov), or from address or district fields if the file has them, and label the result as derived.

How do I look up a DBA? AVInfo can be searched by DBA name, as described above. A DBA must appear in the holder's operations specifications (www.law.cornell.edu), so a match there is evidence of an alias of one legal holder.

What is the difference between an operator, an owner and a broker? The registry records the owner of record; the certificate holder controls the operation and uses OpSpec D085 for specific-aircraft authorization by registration number (FAA AC 135-44); a broker is an indirect air carrier or agent (www.law.cornell.edu).

What does it mean if an operator or tail is missing? FAA's guidance is to contact the local FSDO. Record it as unverified in that snapshot and escalate; it is not a finding about the operator.

How do I run an FAA air operator certificate search for Part 135? Use the AVInfo Air Operator Search for operator and DBA names, filter to Part 135, and cross-check the weekly spreadsheet by name and by N-number.

Can I use DOT's carrier list instead? DOT's certificated-carrier list concerns economic certification. DOT economic authority is separate from FAA safety authority. For interstate Part 135 checks, obtain the applicable DOT commuter-authority or air-taxi registration record, following FAA guidance, and verify FAA safety authorization separately.

Is the aircraft count the same as the company count? No. Aircraft can appear on more than one certificate, and public figures show about 6.3 aircraft rows per holder.

Conclusion

The FAA Part 135 operator list is the right primary source for deciding whether a company belongs in a US charter universe, but it answers an authorization question, not a market-structure question. A disciplined screen separates the brand, the legal certificate holder and the authorized aircraft, joins them only through a documented evidence ladder, and reports a denominator waterfall from raw rows to unique holders to reviewed in-scope operators to unresolved cases.

Three habits carry most of the value. Capture every extract with a retrieval date and a hash. Preserve raw names and aliases, because a DBA is an alias of one holder and not a second company. And treat a missing record as an instruction to escalate to the FAA field office, never as a conclusion. Teams that adopt these habits can reconcile their counts against public figures, defend each edge in review, and update the map weekly as the file changes.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. https://www.faa.gov/about/officeorg/headquartersoffices/avs/faa-certificated-aircraft-operators-legal-part-135-holders
2. https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/14/119.9
3. https://www.faa.gov/documentLibrary/media/Advisory_Circular/AC_135-44_Ed_Upd_%281-30-26%29.pdf
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Research against a defined mandate

A useful target list needs more than company names. Docket focuses on the questions that determine whether a company fits an investment mandate, including the evidence needed to support or qualify each answer. Our research approach makes the connection between screening criteria, source material and conclusions visible to the team reviewing the work.

Triage, Scout and Audit

Docket's three named research agents perform complementary tasks. Triage resolves company identity and screens fit. Scout collects sourced answers against the mandate. Audit checks retained evidence, addresses contradictions and leaves unsupported answers visibly unresolved. This structure helps reviewers distinguish established findings from missing information and questions requiring further investigation.

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Our research library covers market mapping, screening criteria, private-company data, succession and ownership, source evaluation and evidence standards. These resources explain the methods and limitations behind origination research. Findings support a team's judgment; they do not establish that a company is for sale or guarantee a transaction or investment outcome.

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