

BECOME A PILOT FOR ALASKA AIRLINES

Facing a pilot shortage, Alaska and its regional airline, Horizon Air, are launching the Ascend Pilot Academy in partnership with the Hillsboro Aero Academy in Oregon. The program, announced on Wednesday, focuses on students with little to no flying time, who might not be considering a career in aviation.

“We’re hoping to reach the population that might think flying is not for them,” Carlos Zendejas, Horizon’s vice president of flight operations.

Students accepted into Ascend Pilot Academy will also receive a contingent job offer to become first officers at Horizon, which operates the Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 and the Embraer 175. Students will earn their ratings from private pilot up to commercial pilot and will receive a \$25,000 stipend to pay for the commercial license. After graduating from the program with a commercial license, students can become flight instructors at Hillsboro to earn the hours required to obtain the airline transport pilot certificate needed to fly for Horizon. Once obtaining the required 1,500 flight hours, students are placed in a new-hire class at Horizon.

To get hired at Alaska Airlines, Ascend Pilot Academy graduates who reach Horizon’s flight decks must apply for quarterly openings with the airline’s pathway program and go through an interview process. Zendejas noted that the majority of Horizon pilots who interview for pilot jobs at Alaska are successful.

Alaska and Horizon are just the latest airlines to focus on recruiting and training pilots with no experience. United Airlines owns and operates the United Aviate Academy near Phoenix, while regional Republic Airways owns and operates the LIFT Academy. Other airlines, including Spirit Airlines, Frontier Airlines and Avelo Airlines, partner with flight-training giant ATP Flight School to offer a similar experience.

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