

# Training Corner

## THE RECREATIONAL PILOT CERTIFICATE

Thirteenth in a series of articles by:

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In my last article #12, I discussed **The Practical Test Standards**. It specifies what you must do to get you ready for the FAA "check-ride." This flying test states what you should be able to do and how well you should do it.

The level of pilot certification you are seeking determines the number of tasks and the level of proficiency of each PTS. A commercial pilot is eligible to charge for his/her services to the public and to make flying a full-time career. A recreational pilot, on the other hand, normally flies for fun and usually part-time. Flying for public hire as opposed to flying for one's own fun are two different levels of skill and proficiency.

Since gyroplanes are mostly used for recreation, the Recreational Pilot Certificate is the one that is most appropriate for the majority of pilots. It is a fully recognized FAA license and you must meet all of the requirements just like any other rating.

To meet the requirements as a **Recreational Pilot** in **FAR Part 61-Certification; Subpart D-Recreational Pilots**; you must, under § 61.96[b];

- [1] Be at least 17 years of age
- [2] Be fluent in English
- [3] Receive an instructor's logbook endorsement on aeronautical knowledge
- [4] Pass an FAA written test
- [5] Receive and log authorized flight training
- [6] Meet the aeronautical experience required in § 61.99
- [7] Pass the required practical test [PTS]
- [8] Comply with the sections of this part [Subpart D].

What [8] refers to are the lim-

itations that apply to category and class. The significant limitations of a Recreational License under § 61.101 are:

- [a][1] Carry only one passenger
- [b] Operate within 50 NM from your departure airport
- [d][6] No flying at night
- [d][9] No flying with less than 3 SM visibility.

Section 61.101 has quite a number of other limitations, but most of them do not pertain to flying sport gyroplanes. What is important to note is that the above limitations don't have to be limitations! You can receive additional cross-country training from your instructor, have your logbook endorsed, carry it with you as proof of your training, and go fly cross-country without the 50 NM limitation.

It is possible a Recreational Rating is more than you care to invest in. It is legal to fly without a license. FAR Part 103-Ultralight Vehicles might be the route for you.

Since you do not need a license, you are not required to have any dual instruction. This freedom has caused so many fatalities that numerous training exemptions have been created to allow certain designated pilots to teach flight basics. DO NOT try to teach yourself to fly!

Next you need to know the limitations of flying ultralights. Since this activity does not require the level of proficiency that licensing requires, more effort is taken to protect the public from potential hazards from above. I do not intend to imply that ultralight pilots are not competent and skillful airmen. Many of my colleagues are excellent ultralight pilots. They fly safe equipment and operate carefully.

**FAR Part 103; Subpart A-General; and Subpart B-Operating Rules** spell out the limitations of ultralight operations. The pertinent ones follow:

- § 103.1[a] Single occupant only
- [b] Recreation or sport use only
- [e][1] weighs less than 254 pounds empty weight excluding safety equipment
- [e][2] No more than 5 U.S. gallons of fuel [about 1 hour of flying]
- [e][3] Maximum speed of 55 KTS in level flight at full power

§ 103.15 No flying over congested areas like cities, towns, settlements, or crowds of people.

Something you should be aware of is that ultralights are considered vehicles and not aircraft. As a matter of fact, you are not a pilot; you are an occupant. You cannot log ultralight flight time as aeronautical experience toward any kind of FAA rating or license. In a logbook is a column headed Registration Number. That means "N" number. If you do not have an N-number, you can't log the time.

If you care to register your ultralight with an N-number, it now magically becomes an "aircraft" and you a "pilot." As such your aircraft now has a registration and experimental airworthiness certificate; and, yes, you now need a pilot certificate to fly a registered aircraft.

Therefore, the decision to fly unlicensed or licensed depends upon the level of flying privileges you would like to have. If you are intending to fly only a single-seater and are not too heavy, the ultralight route might work well for you. On the other hand, if the ultralight limitations restrict you too much in the way you want to fly, or if you are too

heavy for an ultralight, you will need to go the licensed route.

In my next article I'll discuss the Private Pilot Certificate, and the differences in the Recreational and Private PTSs. In future articles, I'll also tell you about add-on ratings to an existing pilot certificate. You can get credit for some of the PTS tasks you have already passed.

If you do not have a Practical Test Standard [PTS] for the level of rating you are interested in, they are a free download from the FAA's Web site. Go to: <http://afs600.faa.gov>, click Search, scroll down to Practical Test Standards, and click Search again. Downloads are in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format, so everyone should be able to receive them.

CAUTION: Be patient and master each stage of flying and knowledge before venturing on. The longer you are in aviation the more you find out you are never as good or as smart as you think you are.

Remember, "the air, even more so than the sea, is most unforgiving for the slightest mistake." Get qualified flight instruction before getting into a gyro. Skillful pilots make it look easy, but it takes time to learn. Do not get into a hurry and take chances.

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