

What do you mean that changed?

By Richard Carlson – SSF Chairman

Most of us recognize that soaring demands we recognize and adapt to change. We accept that the soaring conditions will change throughout the day. Weaker in the morning and evening than at mid-day. When on-course, a straight line between 2 turnpoints is typically not the flight path needed to make this flight. By recognizing and adapting to these changing conditions we can achieve our personal goals.

However, what about changes in the other aspects of soaring? Regulations change, instruments change, vocabulary changes, and technology advances. Do we seek out and embrace changes in these areas as well?

Let's explore a few of the more recent changes. How many do you already know? How many more did we not cover here?

The FAA is in the process of updating multiple regulations. They accomplish this by publishing a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in Federal Register. In the past year, some of the NPRMs impacting us have been updates to the Glider Flying Handbook, Flight Instructor renewal procedures, and Light Sport Aircraft definitions.

The Glider Flying Handbook (GFH) is the main document, published by the FAA, that covers glider operations and maneuvers. The current version (FAA-H-8083-13A) was published in 2013 and a link to the current version is found on the FAA's web page at [https://www.faa.gov/regulations\\_policies/handbooks\\_manuals/aviation](https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/handbooks_manuals/aviation). Don't forget to look at the Errata sheet as well. The SSF trustees submitted dozens of comments regarding this update to correct errors in both the text and images. We will keep you informed on when a new version can be expected.

The FAA publishes Flying Handbooks for other categories of aircraft (airplane, helicopter, balloon, etc) and is in the process of updating them as well. One big change in these is to focus the document on operating that specific category of aircraft. This eliminates more generic information such as the Aeronautical Decision Making/Risk Management (ADM/RM) skills that all pilots need to master. Instead this ADM/RM information is found in the Pilots Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge (FAA-H-8083-25C) updated in 2023. ADM/RM skills are also called out in the 'Risk Management Handbook (FAA-H-8083-2A) updated in 2022. PDF versions of these are linked off of the FAA web page listed above. All gliders pilots should be reading these handbooks, not just the GFH.

Unlike your pilot certificate, the CFI certificate has an expiration date on it. This requires that the FAA issue new certificates every 2 years as part of the renewal process. The FAA is proposing to change this process and make renewals a 'recency of experience' process similar to a Flight Review. The effect of this change would mean no expiration date on the CFI certificate, while still requiring CFI's to demonstrate instructional currency and proficiency using the same methods they use now. The FAA would also maintain a public list of your instructors most recent completion date. This change is currently pending and the SSA/SSF will update members once a decision on implementing it is made.

Speaking of CFI's, when was the last time you looked at the Aviation Instructor's Handbook (FAA-H-8083-9B)? It had a complete rewrite in 2020 including the reordering of it's chapters. Among the numerous changes the word 'Student' switched to 'Learner' to emphasis that CFI's deal with more than Student Pilots. Sending a CFI candidate, who used your old paper copy of this handbook, to the DPE will not go well for you or the candidate!



The FAA is proposing major changes to the Light Sport Aircraft definition. Currently the FAA has specific definitions for max weight, V<sub>so</sub>, V<sub>ne</sub>, and number of seats. The proposed changes eliminate the max weight, set new V<sub>so</sub> and V<sub>ne</sub> limits, and change the max number of seats, but not the max number of passengers. This change, if approved, would open up the number of aircraft that could be operated by someone with a Light Sport Pilot certificate. The SSA and SSF are still evaluating the impact of these changes and will submit comments by the middle of January 2024.

When was the last time you looked at the most recent version of the AIM? Do you know that AIM stands for Aeronautical Information Manual? This change was made over a decade ago. A more recent change is the acronym NOTAM. It now stands for 'Notice to Air Missions'. Did you also know that the AIM is published on a regular 6 month schedule? The publication dates are printed in the introduction section of each addition, showing dates for the next 2-3 years. You can also download a PDF of the latest version from the FAA's web site.

Showing up for your practical 'flight' test with your DPE or your Flight Review with your instructor using the old acronyms and not knowing about current/pending regulatory changes really shows that you are not staying current.

As you can see, multiple changes have been made or are in the works and it is up to us as pilots to keep track and incorporate them into our daily flying.

So, what was your score? How many of these changes were you aware of? What other changes did you miss out on?

One way to keep current is to look at the SSF's Flight Instructor Refresher Course (FIRC) presentation web page <https://www.soaringsafety.org/presentations/presfirc.html>. There you will find a link to the 'FAA Regulatory, Policy, and Publications Changes and Updates' presentation. The FAA requires that FIRC providers cover this topic and we update it multiple times a year to ensure that instructors who take our class have the most up-to-date information. You too can also monitor this page to stay informed.

Keep current and have fun soaring.