

Your Soaring Safety Foundation – Convention Experience
By the SSF Trustees and Advisors

October! Time for leaves to turn colors and cool days free from the oppressive summer heat and humidity. In 2024 it is also time for the SSA convention in Knoxville TN to bring the tribes together again. While most of us think the convention runs from Thursday – Saturday (Oct 24-26, 2024), the Soaring Safety Foundation (SSF) programs begin two days in advance.

The SSF's activities begin on Tuesday Oct 22 with our FAA approved Flight Instructor Refresher Course (FIRC). You may not know but your local flight instructor must renew their CFI certificate every 24 months. This is the only FAA pilot certificate with an expiration date. While there are multiple ways to renew, the SSF's FIRC is the only glider focused course in the country. Any flight instructor (glider, airplane, or helicopter) can use the SSF course to renew. If you, or your friend's instructor certificate has an expiration date of Oct 31, 2024, Nov 30, 2024, Dec 31, 2024, or Jan 31, 2025, you can take this 2 day (16 hour) course to extend your CFI expiration date out 2 years (2026 for Oct, Nov, Dec or 2027 for Jan).

While this glider focused FIRC is focused on renewing existing flight instructor certificates, non-instructors and instructor wannabe's are also welcome. If your instructor certificate expires sometime after Jan 31, 2025, you can still take this course and we can work with you to get you the latest expiration date possible. The SSF also runs several FIRCs around the country from Jan – April. Check the current and past schedule by visiting the FIRC schedule web page at <https://www.soaringsafety.org/outreach/FIRC.html> You can also view copies of the FIRC presentations by going to the <https://www.soaringsafety.org/presentations/presfirc.html> web page.

For those of you arriving on Wednesday October 23 be sure to attend the SSF's evening Safety Seminar, the traditional opening event at all SSA conventions. This free (no registration required) event starts at 6:00 pm with several speakers lined up to discuss a variety of topics including glider and towplane accident trends, experienced pilot complacency, pilot currency versus pilot proficiency, motorglider and self-launch sailplane training plus information on the SSA Group Insurance Plan. In addition to the talks, you may apply for FAA WINGS credits for attending. Use these credits towards your next WINGS phase and remember, completing a phase of WINGS resets your Flight Review date. See the September 2022 issue of SOARING for a discussion of the FAA WINGS program also reprinted at <https://www.soaringsafety.org/publications/Sept-2022-WINGS-overview.pdf>

The remainder of the week doesn't mean an end to SSF activities. Register for the Tow-Pilot and Instructor breakfast and spend the morning with your colleagues and friends who help you fly.

The OSTIV speaker track also provides an opportunity for SSF trustees and advisors to share training and safety messages with the community. OSTIV - the international Scientific and Technical Soaring organization encourages and coordinates the development and use of sailplanes in pure and applied research. The 3 day speaker track, running alongside the SSA organized speaker tracks, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the convention. This year SSF Chairman Carlson will present a talk on experiments in using Open Glider Network (OGN) data to improve U.S. glider accident statistics.

Friday evening also puts OSTIV front and center with a banquet. Join your friends in colleagues and listen to a featured speaker.



If you are wandering around the convention exhibit hall stop by the SSF booth to meet and chat with our SSF Trustees and Advisors who are ready to discuss your questions about training and safety. We invite you to share your thoughts and ideas with us or just to say hello, then the SSF booth is the place and time to visit with us.

As you can see, this will be a full week of activities for the SSF trustees and advisors. Join us and learn more about how to have safe and fun soaring at your local glider operation.

