

Halfway and Counting

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Happy New Year! The start of 2007 marks the halfway point in the Sport Pilot Rule transition for ultralight pilots and their ultralight vehicles. The focus in 2006 was on pilot transition. The focus in 2007 will be on the transition of ultralight machines to registered aircraft and BFI (Basic Flight Instructor) transition to Light Sport Instructor. The focus is driven by the deadlines established by the Sport Pilot Rule.

The transition period for ultralight pilots, registered with one of the ultralight organizations before September 2004, to take full advantage of the transition provisions (grandfather) ends at the end January, 2007. The Practical Test (check ride) must be successfully completed by the end of January. No extensions are expected. If the Practical Test was started and discontinued, it must be successfully completed by the end of January. The advantage of completing the Practical Test by the end of January was detailed in prior articles and can be summarized by saying, "You can save lots of money by taking advantage of the special provisions for ultralight pilots detailed in 14CFR 61.329". See "6 months and Counting" in UltraFlight Magazine, July, 2006.

If the January deadline does not work for your schedule, all is not lost. Your logged ultralight flying time counts toward the time required for a sport pilot certificate. You will have to meet all of the aeronautical experience required in 14CFR 61.313 (Aeronautical Experience) and have all of that required time entered in a logbook. Flight instruction received (dual) must be signed by an instructor and there is a requirement for cross country instruction and a cross country flight. Make sure you review all of the requirements in Part 61 (Certification of Pilots and Flight Instructors), Subpart J (Sport Pilot) as you will be required to meet all of Subpart J.

Important items for pilots:

- After the January date has passed, there is no absolute deadline for an ultralight pilot to transition to sport pilot. Properly logged flight time is good forever.
- The Training Exemption to Part 103 ends January 31, 2008.
- 14CFR Part 103 does not go away. If you choose to continue flying under Part 103, make sure you and your ultralight are compliant with Part 103

The 2007 focus is on meeting the deadline for transitioning your machine to a light sport aircraft (LSA). If you plan to transition your single seat "ultralight" or two seat training machine to LSA, the transition must be completed by January 31, 2008. NOW is the time to start working on that transition.

You should begin the transition research and aircraft review now. Understand the steps that are required for the transition and how long each step will take. Review the condition of your machine and allow for any repairs or changes that may be necessary for the certification inspection. Understand the advantage of transitioning to LSA and the downside of beginning the process. There are publications available that will guide you through the process from your ultralight organization. The objective is to take the surprises out of the transition process before the process begins.

The process is simple enough, but there are details and sequences that have to be followed. Registration, aircraft preparation/paperwork and a condition inspection by a DAR are the simple steps but there are details at each step. Reviewing each step in advance is important. One year sounds like a long time to complete the process, but it may not be as long as you think. Start the review/process.

The value of your training vehicle (two seat ultralight) may drop considerably if you miss the January 31, 2008 deadline of the transition period. The Sport Pilot Rule allows "fat ultralights" to be certified as Experimental – Light Sport Aircraft during the transition period. After January 31, 2008, the transition of existing machines to Experimental – Light Sport Aircraft is no longer allowed. There is no other Experimental Certificate that existing machines can be transitioned to. They are not Experimental – Armature Built and not likely to qualify for other Experimental Certificates. One exception may be Experimental – Exhibition, but that certification requires a large amount of paperwork and prior notification to the FAA of where the aircraft will be flown & exhibited. More information can be found in 14CFR 21.191 and 14CFR 21.193.

Important dates for LSA:

- The transition from ultralight vehicle to LSA must be completed by January 31, 2008.
- The Training Exemption to Part 103 ends January 31, 2008. After that date, the two seat machines can no longer be flown as ultralight training vehicles or ultralights.

BFI's (Ultralight Instructors) have an opportunity to transition to Light Sport Instructors and take advantage of their ultralight instruction time in meeting the requirements of 14CFR Part 61 (Certification of Pilots and Flight Instructors), Subpart K (Light Sport Instructors). The special provisions (grandfather) are listed in 14CFR 61.431 and are similar to the special provisions (grandfather) for sport pilots. This is an opportunity to get credit for your ultralight instruction flying time and save some money for those BFI's that want to continue instructing.

The Two Seat Training Exemption for all three ultralight organizations will end in January 2008. This will mark the end of the BFI/AFI programs and ultralight instructors. The Light Sport Instructors will be called on for ultralight instruction.

The industry needs instructors that are willing to instruct for both the LSA segment and the ultralight segment. If you are an active BFI, please consider transiting to a Light Sport Instructor and be able to support both aviation segments.

Important dates for BFIs

- The transition period for BFIs to Light Sport Instructor ends January 31, 2008
- The Training Exemption to Part 103 ends January 31, 2008. After that date, BFIs can no longer instruct.

Sport Pilot activity has been strong in 2006 and is expected to continue to grow well into the future. The program is here to stay and is a benefit to the entire aviation community. As ultralight pilots and owners of ultralight machines, we have an opportunity to make the transition to light sport and take advantage of our ultralight knowledge and experience. We are halfway through the transition period. Don't lose what you have earned and paid for. Take advantage of the transition before it ends.

If you choose to continue to fly according to Part 103, be compliant.

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