

What really happens to a transitioning “Ultralight Pilot” on January 31, 2007?

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Are you confused on what happens if you are an ultralight pilot and you have not made the transition to a sport pilot? Have you been told that your “letter from your ultralight organization is no longer valid?” Well, you are not alone! There has been a lot of confusion on what really happens if an ultralight pilot does not obtain their sport pilot certificate on or before the January 31, 2007 cutoff date referenced in 14 CFR 61.329(a)(1). To clarify, this deadline only applies to ultralight pilots who have been registered with one of the four FAA recognized organizations on or prior to September 1, 2004. If you are not one of these pilots this date does not apply to you.

To understand this rule you will need to break §61.329(a) into two parts. Firstly, Part §61.329(a)(1) describes the approaching deadline and only applies to ultralight pilots who were part of a recognized organization on or prior to September 1, 2004. Secondly, Part §61.329(a)(2) applies to anyone who has registered as an ultralight pilot after September 1, 2004.

In reality the special provisions provided for in §61.329(a)(1) expire on January 31, 2007. Effective February 1, 2007:

1. You must have the aeronautical knowledge requirements specified in § 61.309. This means you must now receive and log ground training from an authorized instructor or complete a home-study course on the applicable aeronautical knowledge areas for a sport pilot.
2. You must have the flight proficiency requirements specified in § 61.311. At which time, you must receive and log ground and flight training from an authorized instructor on the appropriate areas of operation for the category of light-sport aircraft being sought.
3. You must have the aeronautical experience requirements specified in § 61.313. At which time, you must log the flight experience required for the applicable category of light-sport aircraft for which you seek to obtain a sport pilot certificate.
4. You will no longer be able to use the knowledge test for a flight instructor certificate to obtain a sport pilot certificate. If you have only taken the flight instructor knowledge test, you will also be required to take the sport pilot knowledge test for your category of light-sport aircraft.
5. You will no longer be able to obtain an endorsement for each category, class, and make and model of aircraft listed on your ultralight pilot records. You will have to take

and pass a proficiency check for each additional category and class of light-sport aircraft being sought.

Does this mean you will be able to use the logged aeronautical experience you have obtained as an ultralight pilot?

The answer to this question is yes, 14 CFR 61.52 authorizes you to use your ultralight flight experience. One misinterpretation of §61.52 is that the ultralight flight experience obtained while a member of a FAA recognized ultralight organization is ONLY valid until January, 31 2007 for pilots or January 31, 2008 for flight instructors. This is not the case, your aeronautical experience obtain under §61.52 is good forever! Your organizational membership letter and your logbook will qualify as proof of your experience. Therefore, you will need to keep these documents until you have obtained the certificates and/or ratings being sought.

The aeronautical experience obtained in an ultralight vehicle however, can ONLY be used to meet the requirements for a sport pilot certificate, a flight instructor certificate with a sport pilot rating and a private pilot certificate with a weight-shift-control or powered parachute category rating. This experience CANNOT be used for any other FAA certificates or ratings.

This time must have been logged in accordance with the provisions for logging aeronautical experience specified by a FAA recognized ultralight organization and in accordance with provisions for logging pilot time in an aircraft as specified in §61.51.

You must have obtained this experience as a registered ultralight pilot with one of the FAA recognized ultralight organizations.

Who are the four FAA recognized ultralight organizations?

ASC – Aero Sports Connection

EAA – Experimental Aircraft Association

USHPA – United States Hang Gliding and Para Gliding Association

USUA – United States Ultralight Association

While there has been some confusion about the transition for both ultralight pilots and vehicles, it is important that you understand the process and how it will affect you, especially if you are a transitioning pilot. The Light-Sport Aviation Branch, AFS-610, is here to support you in answering questions about light sport aviation topics. Please give us a call at (405) 954-6400.