

Medical Pilot

IF ONE WORD DESCRIBES THE notice of proposed rule-making (NPRM) that details the “Certification of Aircraft and Airmen for the Operation of Light-Sport Aircraft,” it is innovation. (For more information about the NPRM, known unofficially as the sport pilot proposal, visit EAA’s sport pilot website at www.sportpilot.org.)

Pilot medical certification is a good example of this innovation. Sport pilots (and already certificated pilots who want to fly to sport pilot privileges and limitations) will have a choice: a valid U.S. driver’s license or any airman medical certificate.

Naturally, with choice sometimes comes confusion, and EAA headquarters has received a number of questions about these proposed medical certification innovations. Here are the questions most frequently asked—and their answers.

Q. What medical certification must a sport pilot hold?

A. As proposed by the NPRM, a sport pilot who flies a powered aircraft (fixed-wing, powered parachute, trike, or gyroplane) must hold either a current U.S. driver’s license (issued by a state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, a territory, a possession, or the federal government) or a current airman medical certificate. And

Medical Certification Innovations

Sport pilot gives people a choice

MARY JONES

the pilot must comply with the listed restrictions, such as “must wear

Sport pilots (and pilots who want to exercise sport pilot privileges) will have a choice: a valid U.S. driver’s license or at least a third-class medical certificate.

glasses or contacts.”

The FAA does not require medical certification for pilots flying gliders and balloons. But these pilots must state that they do not know of or have reason to know of any medical condition that would make them unable to operate the aircraft in a safe manner.

Regardless of what certificate a pilot holds, all pilots must adhere to Federal Aviation Regulation 61.53, “Prohibition on Operations During Medical Deficiency.” It prohibits pilots from flying as pilot in command whenever they know of or have reason to know of any medical condition, or are taking medication or receiving treatment for a medical condition, that would prevent them from having a safe flight.

Q. What does, “You must not act as pilot in command of the aircraft if you know of or have reason to know of any medical condition that would make you unable to operate the aircraft in a safe manner,” mean?

A. Simply, if you don’t feel well, you must not fly as a pilot in command. If you’re receiving treatment from a doctor who advises you not to drive or fly, you must not drive or fly. And if you are taking any medication, prescribed or over the counter, that causes drowsiness, you must not fly.



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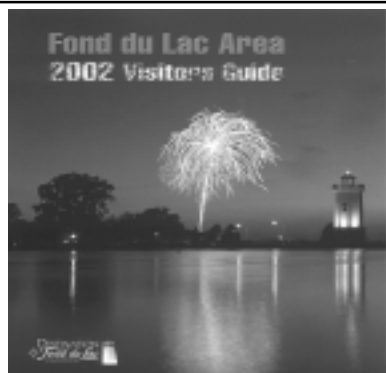
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Medical Pilot

Q. *I'm a private pilot, but I don't have a current third-class medical certificate. Based on the NPRM, I should be able to exercise the privileges of a sport pilot certificate and fly an aircraft that meets the definition of a light-sport aircraft if I have a valid driver's license. Is that correct?*

A. That is correct. In addition to your driver's license, you'll need a current flight review, which you can take in the sport-pilot eligible aircraft. And if you have not previously logged pilot-in-command time in the aircraft, you must get an instructor's endorsement for it.

If you want to exercise the privileges of your private pilot certificate and fly an aircraft that *does not* meet the definition of a light-sport aircraft, you must obtain at least a third-class medical certificate.

Q. *Can private pilots let their medical certificate expire and exercise sport pilot privileges?*

A. Yes, as long as they have a valid U.S. driver's license and they fly a sport-pilot eligible aircraft for which they are rated (like airplane, single-engine, land). If the pilots do not have pilot-in-command time in the sport-pilot eligible aircraft they intend to fly, they must obtain an instructor's make and model endorsement.

Q. *Can people with a valid state driver's license fly as a sport pilot if they have been denied an airman medical certificate?*

A. Yes. For sport pilots, a valid driver's license is a medically qualifying document. If you meet the medical requirements to drive a car (or motorcycle), then you may fly an aircraft that meets the definition of a light-sport aircraft as a sport pilot.

If your medically disqualifying condition prohibits you from driving a car, then you cannot fly as a

sport pilot. If a physician medically certifies you safe to drive, and you obtain a driver's license, then you can return to flying status as a sport pilot in command.

As a side note, a person without a valid driver's license or an airman medical certificate can still fly in a light-sport aircraft as a passenger, but that person cannot act as pilot in command.

Q. *When using the driver's license medical certification option, will the disqualifying conditions listed in the FARs still apply?*

A. No. A driver's license is a sport pilot's medical exam/certificate "proving document," and the FAA medically disqualifying conditions do not apply. The states establish the medically disqualifying conditions through their driver's license requirements. If a state determines a person medically unqualified to drive and won't issue a driver's license, that same person is medically unqualified to fly as a sport pilot.

Q. *What happens if my diver's license is revoked?*

A. If you're a sport pilot who does not hold a current airman medical certificate—you cannot fly without a valid driver's license. If you're a private pilot exercising the privileges of a sport pilot and your driver's license is revoked, to continue flying you must obtain at least a third-class medical certificate. Or, in both cases—get your driver's license back.

In this regard, the sport pilot NPRM not only increases safety in the air, but also increases safety on the roads because any violation that puts a sport pilot's driver's license in jeopardy—such as speeding, reckless driving, or driving under the influence—will also ground a sport pilot and others enjoying the privileges of the new certificate.