

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****Federal Aviation Administration****14 CFR Parts 61 and 141**

[Docket No. 21371; Amendment Nos. 61-73 and 141-1]

**Cross-Country Experience Requirements for Pilot Certification**

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** These amendments change certain cross-country aeronautical experience requirements for private and commercial pilot applicants. They modify the minimum leg length and specify the minimum distance that must be traveled from the point of origin on the extended cross-country flight for private and commercial pilot certificate trainees. These amendments respond to recognized needs for greater flexibility in the flight training environment while maintaining the overall flight time requirements.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** November 15, 1982.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Roger M. Baker Jr., Project Development Branch (AFO-850), General Aviation and Commercial Division, Office of Flight Operations, Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20591; telephone (202) 426-8150.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background**

Part 61 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) prescribes the requirements for issuing pilot and flight instructor certificates and ratings. Amendment 61-60 effective November 1, 1973, revised Part 61 and upgraded pilot training requirements to reflect the increasing complexity of the modern aircraft and its operating environment. Likewise, Part 141 was revised by Amendment 141-13 effective November 1, 1974, to upgrade the training provided by FAA-certificated pilot schools to assure a level of training equivalent to that required by revised Part 61.

In revised Parts 61 and 141, the minimum cross-country experience requirements were significantly upgraded to ensure that applicants for private and commercial pilot certificates receive realistic operational training and experience while under the supervision of a qualified instructor. By requiring the additional experience, the public is ensured a higher degree of safety because pilots with a low level of experience are required to complete extensive cross-country flights before

their certification. The increased cross-country requirements represented an effort to increase basic pilot knowledge and experience, the lack of which was considered a frequent cause of en route accidents.

Revised Parts 61 and 141 currently require, as is pertinent to these amendments, that applicants for private pilot certificates fly at least one extended solo cross-country flight during their training. The flight must include landings at three points, each of which is more than 100 nautical miles (nm) from each of the other two points. Similarly, commercial pilot applicants must fly an extended cross-country consisting of a flight with landings at three points, each of which is more than 200 nm (100 nm in Hawaii) from the other two points. The distance between the points must be straight-line distances.

The FAA has received a number of petitions for exemption in which the public has sought relief from the 100 and 200 nm leg requirements. The petitioners contend that the minimum leg lengths do not allow flight instructors and schools adequate flexibility in selecting routes for the extended cross-country flight. Students frequently overfly larger airports with air traffic control facilities and land at much smaller uncontrolled airports a few miles farther from their departure point to meet the requirement that a landing be accomplished at a point more than 100 or 200 nm from the last takeoff. This can result in students missing valuable exposure to larger terminal airport environments. Furthermore, in many areas of the country, terrain features, such as mountains and large bodies of water, restrict in a practical sense where trainees can go on the extended cross-country. Instructors must also take into account a student's experience level, as well as the performance capability of the airplane to be used, in determining where the student should be authorized to go.

On December 1, 1981, the FAA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (Notice 81-16) in response to the recognized needs for greater flexibility. The notice proposed to amend the extended solo cross-country requirements found in § 61.109(b)(2) and Appendix A of Part 141 to require applicants for private pilot certificates to make at least one flight of at least 300 nm with landings at a minimum of three points, one of which is at least 100 nm from the original departure point. The notice also proposed to amend the extended cross-country requirements for commercial pilot applicants found in § 61.129(b)(3)(ii) and in Appendix D of

Part 141 to require applicants to make one flight with landings at a minimum of three points, one of which is at least 150 nm from the original departure point if the flight is conducted in Hawaii, or at least 250 nm from the original departure point if it is conducted elsewhere. The notice was published in the **Federal Register** on December 24, 1981. The closing date for comments was February 22, 1982.

**Discussion of Comments**

Interested persons were afforded the opportunity to participate in the making of these amendments by Notice 81-16 (46 FR 62638; December 24, 1981). Due consideration has been given to all comments presented in response to that notice.

Nineteen public comments, all in support of the proposal, were received. Several commenters agree with the FAA's conclusion that safety would be maintained by reducing the minimum distances between landing points on the extended cross-country training flights while providing instructors and flight schools greater flexibility in determining where to send their students. Two commenters state that the proposal would save their private pilot applicants from having to fly an additional 75 to 100 miles to meet the present requirements, thus saving time, money, and fuel.

Two commenters apparently misunderstand Notice 81-16 in that they state that they agree with retaining the minimum leg distance for at least one leg of the required flight. This was not intended in the proposal. The FAA has determined that elimination of minimum leg lengths for the extended cross-country flight, while maintaining the requirement for a landing to be accomplished at a minimum straight-line distance from the original departure point, will afford as much or more exposure to the operational environment as is now gained under the current rule. The FAA does not anticipate that relaxation of the rule will result in instructors dispatching students on extended cross-country flights with very short distances between landing points. Rather, it is intended to allow instructors the needed flexibility to dispatch students on realistic cross-country training flights compatible with the equipment to be used, the terrain, and the ground and navigational facilities available.

One commenter recommends increasing the dual cross-country requirements in §§ 61.107(a)(7) and 61.109(a)(1). Those recommendations are outside the scope of Notice 81-16 and,

therefore, cannot be considered in this final rulemaking action. That commenter also recommends that § 61.109(b)(2) be amended to require a 200 nm solo cross-country flight instead of a 300 nm solo cross-country flight as proposed in Notice 81-16. The commenter claims that there is no need to subject student pilots to the fatigue associated with extended cross-country flights in slow airplanes with limited range. The FAA does not agree with that recommendation. The rule is not intended to deliberately induce pilot fatigue. Rather, it provides, in a controlled situation, an opportunity for a person to recognize his or her own capability regarding extended flights. It is also an appropriate time for students to be made aware of the steps that can be taken before a flight, as noted in the Airman's Information Manual, to avoid fatigue in flight. The 300 nm cross-country flight is designed to give the student experience in extended cross-country flight over as great a variety of terrain as possible commensurate with the aeronautical knowledge and skill level expected of a private pilot applicant. Additionally, the deletion of minimum leg lengths between landing points will allow students to use more fully airplanes with limited-range capabilities. This will also increase safety by making available a greater choice of en route refueling points without imposing the anxiety on the student of not meeting certain pilot certification criteria.

One commenter notes that he has known cases where a student had to return to home base without completing an extended cross-country flight because poor weather made completion of the flight impossible that day. That commenter notes that designated examiners and inspectors have interpreted the cross-country flight rules as requiring that the flight be completed in 1 day. While it is recognized that permitting an interruption of the flight is subject to abuse and an unreasonable delay will not be permitted, there is no requirement that the extended cross-country flight be completed in 1 day.

**Description of the Amendment**

The FAA is amending Parts 61 and 141 as proposed in Notice 81-16. Although the reasons for adopting the revised pilot certification requirements remain unchanged, the goal of upgrading the competency of newly certificated pilots and enhancing the safety of air commerce can be met in another manner regarding the extended cross-country requirements.

These amendments will provide the needed flexibility to instructors and

pilot schools in determining where to send students on cross-country flights. So that students will not gain the required cross-country experience with repeated trips over the same routes of short length, the amendments will impose a minimum distance for the farthest landing on the extended cross-country (100 nm for private pilot applicants and 250 nm for commercial pilot applicants). They will eliminate the minimum required distances between each of three points on extended cross-country flights so that instructors can dispatch students on practical cross-country flights after considering the terrain over which the student will be flying, availability of navigation facilities, complexity of terminal areas along the route, local weather characteristics, etc.

Safety will be maintained by reducing the minimum distances between landing points on the extended cross-country training flights. Instructors will be able to send students on flights which will offer as much or more exposure to the operational environment as is now gained under the current rule. Additionally, students will not feel as pressured to complete a particular nonstop leg to meet the minimum experience requirements for a pilot certificate when prudent practice would dictate landing short of the original destination. The requirement of a landing at a point which is a specified distance from the original departure point will ensure that students are exposed to realistic cross-country flying conditions over terrain with which they are not intimately familiar. The current requirement contained in §§ 61.109(b)(2), 61.129(b)(3)(ii), and Part 141, Appendix A, paragraph 4(b)(1), that a landing must be made more than 50 nm from the point of departure for a cross-country flight to be credited toward meeting the aeronautical experience requirements for a pilot certificate or rating will remain unchanged. This requirement has been included in the amendment to Part 141, Appendix D, paragraph 3(c)(2), to make it consistent with the minimum cross-country experience requirements for commercial pilot certification as stated in § 61.129(b)(3)(ii). It also reflects the current practice regarding certificated pilot schools.

Based on the foregoing, the FAA has determined that adopting these amendments relieves the public of an undue economic burden, prevents the waste of aviation fuel, and enhances the safety of private and commercial pilot applicants in the training environment without compromising the level of training necessary to promote safety in

air commerce. Accordingly, the proposal is adopted without change.

These amendments respond to an industry petition for rule change so that pilots will be better trained. A cost impact assessment shows that the regulation involves no additional costs. Furthermore, its provision allowing a more flexible route for the extended cross-country flight requirement can provide economic relief to trainees in the form of fuel savings gained through the availability of more airports that can be efficiently used for cross-country training purposes. Because the total nautical miles presently required for the extended cross-country flight will not be increased for the private pilot applicant and will be reduced for the commercial pilot applicant, the benefits of granting the relief will outweigh any direct costs associated with changing the present regulation. Several commenters agree that the amendments would reduce costs; none disagree.

**List of Subjects**

*14 CFR Part 61*

Airmen, Aircraft pilots, Pilots, Students, Air safety, Safety, Aviation safety, Education.

*14 CFR Part 141*

Airmen, Aircraft pilots, Pilots, Students, Air safety, Safety, Aviation safety, Education, Schools.

**Adoption of the Amendment**

Accordingly, Parts 61 and 141 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR Parts 61 and 141) are amended as follows, effective November 15, 1982:

**PART 61—CERTIFICATION: PILOTS AND FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS**

1. By amending § 61.109(b) by removing the dash after the introduction and substituting a colon; removing the semicolon after paragraph (b)(1) and substituting a period; and revising paragraph (b)(2) to read as follows:

**§ 61.109 Airplane rating: Aeronautical experience.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(b) \* \* \*

(2) Ten hours of cross-country flights, each flight with a landing at a point more than 50 nautical miles from the original departure point. One flight must be of at least 300 nautical miles with landings at a minimum of three points, one of which is at least 100 nautical miles from the original departure point.

\* \* \* \* \*

2. By amending § 61.129 by removing the dash after the introduction to

paragraph (b)(3) and substituting a colon; removing the semicolon after paragraph (b)(3)(i) and substituting a period; and revising paragraph (b)(3)(ii) to read as follows:

**§ 61.129 Airplane rating: Aeronautical experience.**

\* \* \* \* \*

(b) \* \* \*

(3) \* \* \*

(ii) 50 hours of cross-country flights, each flight with a landing at a point more than 50 nautical miles from the original departure point. One flight must have landings at a minimum of three points, one of which is at least 150 nautical miles from the original departure point if the flight is conducted in Hawaii, or at least 250 nautical miles from the original departure point if it is conducted elsewhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

**PART 141—PILOT SCHOOLS**

3. By amending paragraph 4 of Appendix A by removing the dash after the introduction to paragraph 4 and substituting a colon; by removing the semicolon and the word "and" at the end of paragraph 4(a) and substituting a period; and revising paragraph 4(b)(1) to read as follows:

**Appendix A.—Private Pilot Certification Course (Airplanes)**

\* \* \* \* \*

4. \* \* \*

(b) \* \* \*

(1) Ten hours of cross-country flights, each flight with a landing at a point more than 50 nautical miles from the original departure point. One flight must be of at least 300 nautical miles with landings at a minimum of three points, one of which is at least 100 nautical miles from the original departure point.

\* \* \* \* \*

4. By amending Appendix D, paragraph 3(c)(2) to read as follows:

**Appendix D.—Commercial Pilot Certification Course (Airplanes)**

\* \* \* \* \*

3. \* \* \*

(c) \* \* \*

(2) At least 40 hours of solo cross-country flights, each flight with a landing at a point more than 50 nautical miles from the original departure point. One flight must have landings at a minimum of three points, one of which is at least 150 nautical miles from the original departure point if the flight is conducted in Hawaii, or at least 250 nautical miles from the original departure point if it is conducted elsewhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Secs. 313(a), 601, 602 and 607 of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, as amended (49 U.S.C. 1354(a), 1421, 1422, and 1427, and Sec. 6(c) of

the Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. 1655(c))

**Note.**— These amendments reduce the burden on pilots obtaining required cross-country experience by providing more flexibility in the selection of landing points. The amendments will allow savings of fuel costs to trainees and involve no additional costs. Therefore, the FAA has determined that this document involves a regulation which is not major under Executive Order 12291 or significant under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034; February 26, 1979). Because the magnitude of the fuel and other cost benefits will not be large in relation to the aggregate fuel and other training costs, and no additional costs will be imposed, it is certified that under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act this regulation will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. A copy of the regulatory evaluation for this action is contained in the regulatory docket. A copy of it may be obtained by contacting the person identified under the caption "FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT."

Issued in Washington, D.C., on September 20, 1982.

**J. Lynn Helms,**  
*Administrator.*

[FR Doc. 82-28264 Filed 10-13-82; 8:45 am]

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[Docket No. 12547; Amdt. No. ~~12547~~]

**PART 141—PILOT SCHOOLS**

**Correction**

In FR Doc. 74-12776 appearing at page 20146 in the issue for Thursday, June 6, 1974, the following changes should be made:

1. On page 20153 in § 141.11(c) (7), the word "loan" should read "load".

2. On page 20158, Appendix A paragraph 5(c) should read as set forth below:

(c) Each student must satisfactorily accomplish a flight test at the completion of the first solo flight and at the completion of the first solo cross-country flight and at the conclusion of that course.