

The Soaring Society of America, Inc.
Government Liaison Committee
Stephen Northcraft, Chairman

Board of Director's Report
February 28th, Greenville, SC

Overview

There has been a significant development recently in the ADS-B regulations. The FAA will now allow the installation of non-TSO'd ADS-B equipment as long as it meet the performance requirements. This should result in lower cost ADS-B units. A copy of the Federal Register announcement (2015-02579) is attached.

Several of the topic covered in the last report are included again here as the subjects are still of interest to the membership.

Committee Structure

Committee Chair	Stephen Northcraft
Airspace	Cindy Brickner, Hal Becker on transponders
Pilot Certification	Rich Carlson (SSF Trustee)
Airport Utilization	Linda Draper-Hivert (Stephen Northcraft)
Aircraft Certification	S. Northcraft (acting)
RTCA and Special Issues	Bernald Smith
GPS/DAFFI	Rick Sheppe
FAA Rule-making Advisory Comm.	Tim Anderson
Surveillance	Gerry Molidor

Grounding of LET Blanik L-13 Aircraft

EASA issued an Airworthiness Directive (AD) in July, 2011 which detailed specific modifications which must be accomplished in order to return the L-13s to service. As of this date, the FAA has not concurred by issuing their own AD.

Based on recent conversations with the FAA (which knowledgeable individuals have related to me) it is very doubtful that there will be any further action on this topic.

Pegasus

A big win! The FAA agrees that the Pegasus service life can now be extended another 1500 hours to 4500 hours. I take no credit for this one. Member Bob Carlton did all the heavy lifting, using his connections in the US Congress to press for answers to pointed questions (unresolved FOIAs) regarding how the AD was originated. He estimates that he personally spent "thousands" of hours working this. Essentially, ****someone**** in the FAA really ticked him off and he went on a personal crusade.

Thanks, Bob.

Cal City

The glider operation at Cal City remains closed. The FAA's Part 13 determination released in March concluded that the City did not violate their obligations. I will remind the Directors that the airport never actually refused to allow gliders to operate there, rather the local operator quit offering tow services because of the closure of the glider runway. There was a significant amount of misinformation reported on the RAS regarding the closure of this operation; even to the point that AOPA's VP of Government Relations actually commented on the RAS that statements attributed to him were false. Responding on the RAS would have been a futile effort on the part of the SSA, IMHO.

The lesson learned from this is simple, if your operation is threatened, do not wait until the bureaucrats have circled the wagons and it is a done deal before you raise questions. At Cal City no one even spoke against the glider runway closure when it was first placed on the City Council agenda and discussed during their meeting.

In a related action, a letter (included in report) was sent to Member Bluedorn regarding his request at the Convention Membership meeting. Unfortunately, his attitude – expressed on a local blog – is that he thinks the SSA should be willing to bankrupt itself to save his gliderport (“Go big or go home”) and his post (along with other members' posts) indicates little knowledge of the workings of the SSA, or even AOPA.

Non Aeronautical Use of Hangars

FAA-2014-0463 (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-07-22/pdf/2014-17031.pdf>) attached to this report, is a notice for public comment on clarifying the rules concerning non-aeronautical use of hangars at airports. Comments are due by September 5th.

Foreign pilots – license issues

This happens occasionally. Certificates issued under part 61.75 are only valid while the foreign license is valid. If the foreign license becomes invalid the US certificate is also invalid. This typically happens if the foreign certificate is only valid if the pilot has a current medical. Without proof that the foreign license is valid, the US license is invalid. The best solution for foreign pilots resident in the US is to get a US pilot certificate issued on the basis of a practical test. You do not need to be a US citizen to get a US pilot license.

Ramp Checks and Program Letters

The SSA sent comments (attached) to the FAA regarding proposed revisions to 8130.2h, concerning Experimental aircraft certification. Our response was coordinated with the EAA. We expressed several reservation regarding the process (it was not an NPRM) and noted several problems with the draft that impacted glider certification, specifically the structure of Program Letters.

EAA AirVenture Meetings

I attended AirVenture (Oshkosh) this year and participated in two EAA sponsored meetings. The first was the Type Club Coalition meeting, in which EAA brings together the type clubs to discuss common issues. The second was a discussion with the FAA on the Risk Assessment process for Airworthiness Directives. The EAA also held a meeting with the FAA to discuss 8130.2h (noted above), but we were not invited despite my request. I will note however that EAA shared all our concerns, heard many similar stories regarding problems with Program Letters, and is in agreement with all our points.

3rd Class Medical Update

Consistent with what AOPA and EAA have been stating, FAA Administrator Huerta at AirVenture indicated that an NPRM was out for review to the various agencies (TSA, NTSB, etc.) and that he expected to put it out for public comment “in the fall”. Other AirVenture forums included discussions regarding Congressional action on this topic, and the Pilot Bill of Rights 2 (as a response to CBP stops of aircraft).

Airspace

Discussed with AOPA a request by an AOPA/SSA member that our respective organizations ask the FAA for an official ruling regarding our understanding of NOTAM 4/0811 (in which aircraft are advised to avoid overflight of power plants). Our current understanding with the FAA is that gliders do not “loiter”, rather that they are “maneuvering for altitude”. AOPA agrees with the SSA position that opening this issue by requesting an official interpretation could backfire on us in that other Federal agencies might want to become involved in the final determination, and not favorably from our standpoint.

TFRs have been prolific this season; members need to be especially vigilant and check for NOTAMS before flying. Popup TFRs for wildfires have been an issue.

The issue of MOA expansion in the western US continues to be problematic.

Dataplate

The Data Plate exemption made permanent by the FAA in April, 2010 is still permanent. <http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=8671991229&show=blog&id=2062>