

# FAR Part 61: Road Work Ahead



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Many changes  
are effective  
Oct. 20, and more  
changes are  
coming.

**We have all seen it:** Just days after the city repaves the street, a utility company tears through the pavement to repair a failed line. Road work on the FARs works the same way. On Aug. 21, the FAA published a major revision to Part 61, many years in the making. On Aug. 31, the FAA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposing another 16 revisions to Part 61.

The Final Rule was published Aug. 21 and became effective Oct. 20. It represents a staggering amount of work. The FAA published the last major change to Part 61 in 1997. The NPRM for the most recent Final Rule was published in 2007 and drew 1,970 different comments from 231 commenters.

The FAA made two significant proposals in the NPRM: The first one details pilot and flight instructor training and qualifications for night vision goggle (NVG) operations; the second one converts military flight instructor training experience to civilian teaching. Those two changes are important and timely, but there are a total of 102 revisions listed in the six-page summary of the 73-page document. To understand the scope and complexity of the work, it helps to look at a single detail — Revision Number: 72. FAR affected: Part 61.187(b)(6)(vii). Summary of the revision: Deletes the “go-around maneuver” for flight instructor certification for the glider rating.

There was a “go-around maneuver” for glider instructors? While I completely support the decision to delete this requirement, I must admit that if I decide to add a glider rating, I want to be trained by one of the hardy souls who somehow met this requirement in the past. To truly understand why rulemaking is a tough process, you need to recognize that someone *opposed* deleting the go-around requirement for glider instructors. The commenter wanted the requirement to remain for “self-launching” gliders. The FAA is duty-bound to respond to such comments, and this response should be held up as a model for all future rulemaking efforts: “In a self-launching glider, it is possible that a pilot may have to perform a go-around maneuver. However, the FAA is attempting to establish training requirements that are most appropriate for the glider. For pilots taking training in a self-launching glider, flight instructors may want to give their students training on the go-around maneuver, and that decision will be left to the flight instructor and the student when they arrange the training that is best suited to that student’s needs and wants.”

If the public was truly comfortable leaving all instructional decisions to the instructor and student, Part 61 would be a short, easy-to-read pamphlet. Flight instructors will have to carefully study the rewrite of Part 61, because there are extensive, detailed changes to the training requirements for most certificates and ratings.

One of the training improvements that the FAA

incorporated into the Final Rule was an expansion of the role of Aviation Training Devices (ATDs). These less-than-full-flight simulator computer devices can be a remarkably useful (and cost effective) component of any training program. AC 61-136 (July 14, 2008) details FAA specifications and approval requirements for these devices. The FAA requires that when using a flight simulator, flight training device or an ATD for training, an instructor must be present and sign the person’s logbook or training record.

However, the FAA decided to give instructors great latitude in how they choose to be “present” for this training. An instructor seated at a center control panel in a flight simulation lab monitoring several students’ performance is “present” for all of the students at once. An instructor can assign a student several instrument tasks and then leave the room, if the flight training device has a monitoring and tracking system that allows the instructor to review the entire training session.

The most significant changes for all pilots are the changes to instrument recent flight experience requirements under Part 61.57. The FAA decided to withdraw proposed changes to the *basic* requirements, which remain. If you are accomplishing those tasks in flight, there is no hour requirement associated with these tasks.

However, you may now keep up your instrument currency under Part 61.57(c) using ATDs, flight simulators and flight training devices. The simulation devices must be representative of the category of aircraft suitable for your instrument rating privileges. Under new Part 61.57(c)(2), a person may use a flight simulator or flight training device exclusively by performing and logging at least three hours of instrument recent flight experience within the six calendar months before the month of the flight. Under new Part 61.57(c)(3), a person may use an ATD exclusively by performing and logging at least three hours of instrument recent flight experience within the *two* calendar months before the month of the flight. The FAA deliberately established differences between the use of an ATD, flight simulator and flight training device because use of an aviation training device to maintain instrument recent flight experience is a relatively new concept.

Under new Part 61.57(c)(4), a person could combine use of the aircraft and flight simulator, flight training device and ATD to obtain instrument experience. When a pilot elects to combine use of an aircraft and simulation device, the FAA will require completion of one hour of instrument flight time in the aircraft and three hours in the flight simulator, flight training device or ATD within the preceding six calendar months.

It is no small task for pilots to keep up with the changes to Part 61, but the FAA’s job of updating it is an endless, thankless process. ■

Both revisions may be found at:  
[www.faa.gov/  
regulations\\_policies/  
rulemaking/recently\\_published/](http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/rulemaking/recently_published/)