

Tow Pilot Currency

You towed 20 gliders yesterday, and have made 500 tows last year, but are you legally current to act as pilot in command for towing a glider?

We all know the best tow pilots are also glider pilots. No doubt about it! How best to put yourself in another person's place – walk a mile in their shoes, as the saying may go. I say may, because I have a history of never getting the adage correct, but you get my drift! Having been in the same situation as the glider pilot, you as a tow pilot, are then more aware of the aspects of towing that keep a glider pilot safe and happy! Keeping him close to the field on the initial tow out, towing him upwind, executing your turns with a nice shallow bank and taking him to that building cue just ahead, are a few examples.

For those of you who have not soloed a glider or added a glider rating on to your power rating, maybe now is the time to do it! Did you know – if you have not made at least three flights as **pilot in command of a glider** towed by an aircraft, in the preceding 12 months - you are **not** current! Ah... there is one other way to become or stay current, for those who are afraid of not having an engine up front or wish to deny themselves a most wonderful pleasure. According to FAR part 61.69 (6) (i), a pilot is current if “**Within the preceding 12 months** has made at least three actual or simulated glider tows while accompanied by a qualified pilot who meets the requirements of this section.” In other words, you will need a two place power plane which may or may not be a tow plane and a tow pilot who must be current (most likely has his glider rating). Then you need to ride around in the power plane pretending to tow a glider or actually tow a glider for three flights.

Flying a sailplane solo or pursuing the sport long enough to add a glider rating is a worthwhile goal for any tow pilot. What better gift to give yourself than a challenge which will improve your skills all around. It may be that your club has never really approached you repeatedly about getting checked out to fly gliders. They may indeed be unaware of the Federal Aviation Regulations, or they may not want to lose a tow pilot to the joy of soaring. Have you become a contributing member of the club or operation and plan to continue to help tow? If so, approach a glider instructor and arrange some dual time in the glider. You will be glad you did! Many tow pilots tow gliders day after day and are not current! Don't let yourself be one of them!