

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?

61.69(a)(6) deals with towpilot currency. The towpilot has two choices to be current:

(i) Made at least three actual or simulated tows of a glider or unpowered ultralight vehicle while accompanied by a qualified pilot who meets the requirements of this section; or

(ii) Made at least three flights as pilot in command of a glider or unpowered ultralight vehicle towed by an aircraft.

Note that no endorsement is required, but you may wish to make an entry in the remarks section of your log book just in case. If the towpilot is not able to fly a glider as PIC then they must ride with another current towpilot. This applies whether the towpilot has a Private, Commercial, or ATP Certificate.

The best tow pilots are also glider pilots. How best to put yourself in another person's place—walk a mile in their shoes. 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 close to the field on the initial tow out, towing upwind, executing turns with a nice shallow bank, and taking them to the house thermal or that building cu just ahead are a few examples.

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! But, there is another 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.” With 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 a glider rating). 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 that 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.

Many tow pilots tow gliders day after day and are not current! Don't let yourself be one of them!