



First Flight

by

Soaring Safety Foundation Trustees

Soaring is spelled with U, didn't you know? It is YOU we write these items about, because you are soaring. Yes, you may say you need soaring, but so very much more importantly, not only soaring, but the world, needs you. Not necessarily as an SSA member, which is of course nice, but as you, your living self, whether you soar or not, you are who we want to be here tomorrow, the next day and all the next days. Without you being here whether you soar or not or belong to SSA or not, it's a cruel world without you.

One way we suggest for how to stay with us is to always, yes always, whatever your skill level, make that first flight each year with an instructor. FIRST FLIGHT has a lot of meanings, but the most important meaning intended to be passed along in this memo is to convince you to recognize you really do need that first flight of the year with an instructor. You're a Designated Pilot Examiner; so what! You've logged 30,000 hours; so what! You fly all the time; so what! You've never had even an incident; so what! You're a contest champion; so what! You've set more records than anyone; so what! So what if that instructor you choose for your First Flight learns something from you when you fly together; that's good for both of you!

As we have been saying since 2006, and will keep saying each year, make your First Flight of the year with a CFIG. Convince your friends and others at your gliding site to do the same. Maybe you already have been participating in the First Flight program, helping to reduce the number of accidents. Maybe this year will be your first. Either way, First Flight means you commit, and get others to commit, to making your/their First Flight of the year with a CFIG. Maybe that CFIG will notice something you do, or don't do, that is increasing your flight risk and that action may lead to an unsafe condition. Or, that instructor could praise you for the good flying you do. Maybe you'll notice you're flying better with someone watching closely, and that will encourage you to fly better always. Just remember, knowing is better than not knowing, so step up, make that commitment and make your First Flight of 2015 with a CFIG.

The Soaring Safety Foundation (SSF), the training and safety arm of the Soaring Society of America, encourages all US glider pilots of all experience levels to make their "First Flight" of the year with an instructor. This does not necessarily mean you must fly on January 1, just schedule something more extensive than a one-flight "field check" with a CFIG at your local soaring operation when the weather allows.

Review more than just how to get around the pattern and please note that it is not always the student pilots who are having accidents. Not by a long-shot. Reports show quite a few "experienced" pilots and even CFIG's are making serious mistakes that result in accidents. Indeed two FAA Designated Pilot Examiners perished in recent years (but not while giving a checkride.)

So make it a priority to schedule ground and flight sessions to review items such as your gliders assembly/dis-assembly procedure, positive control checks, pre-takeoff checklists, glider-towplane normal and emergency procedures, causes and options regarding Premature Termination of Tow (PT3), all signals, slack towrope recoveries, goal-oriented landing patterns, preventing takeoff roll and landing roll-out loss of control accidents, stall recognition and the spin characteristics of the gliders you may





fly in the coming year. Yep, it may take more than one flight!

Maintain the balance of fun and safety.

Stay proficient (much more than "current".)

Consider flying with an instructor on your "First Flight" of the new year, or anytime your skills may require a second opinion.

Remember, accidents reported to the NTSB and insurance claims made to your insurance company increased in 2014 over 2013. Driving these numbers back down, as was done in 2012 and 2013, will only happen if YOU can help. It does take all of YOU.

