

Answers for Pilots: It's time to get plastic

By Kathy Dondzila

The phones in AOPA's Pilot Information Center are busy with members asking about plastic pilot certificates—suddenly realizing that the deadline for compliance is fast approaching. Pilots are required to obtain plastic pilot certificates by March 31, 2010 if exercising airmen privileges. After that date, most paper pilot certificates will no longer be valid. There are a few exceptions: Airmen with paper certificates for Ground Instructor, Mechanic (Part 65) and those issued under Part 63 have until March 31, 2013 to replace them with plastic.

The FAA's mandate is based on the reasoning that plastic certificates are more counterfeit resistant than paper ones. For newly certificated pilots, compliance is automatic, since all certificates are now being issued in plastic. Those with paper certificates who plan to fly after March 31 can request a plastic replacement certificate online or through the mail. Details on how to apply are included below.



International Members

If you hold an FAA airman certificate and are living outside the U.S. it can be difficult to get a plastic replacement as you cannot request one online or by mail, but must appear in person at a FSDO to have your certificate reissued. You can visit a FAA International Field Office if there is one near you; however, not all of them can process that type of application. Start by calling the FAA International Field office in New York at 718-995-5450. It is possible that they can arrange a meeting with an international inspector.

Inactive Airmen

Airmen who are not actively flying at this time do not need to replace their certificates until they resume flying. No pilot can fly after March 31 with a paper certificate, but a plastic replacement can be requested after that date for pilots who plan to resume flying activity.

How to Request a New or Replacement Pilot Certificate

The easiest way to get a [new or replacement certificate is online](#). If you already have an account, just log in. If you are not yet registered, you'll have to create an account. Follow the steps on the Web page to receive your certificate. If you hold a rating that is no longer issued (such as Glider Aero-Tow), the online system will not process it and you will have to use the paper application process.

To request a replacement certificate by mail, print and fill out AC Form 8060-56: [Application for Replacement of Lost, Destroyed, or Paper Airman Certificate\(s\)](#). Your signed, written request must include the following information: Your name, date and place of birth, social security number and/or certificate number, the reason for the request, and your current address. Include a check for \$2.00 for each replacement certificate requested.

There is a way for some airmen to save the \$2.00 fee—if you still use your social security number as your certificate number and wish to obtain a new certificate number, you can request a new number using AC Form 8060-67: [Request for Change of Certificate Number](#). You will receive a plastic pilot certificate with your new certificate number free of charge.

Questions? Give us a call in the Pilot Information Center, 1-800-USA-AOPA (872-2672) between 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

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