

Ag Rules

It's been two years since important changes to agricultural ratings and training requirements were made in Part 61 *Pilot Licences and Ratings*. Here's a reminder for pilots, instructors, and examiners.

The April 2016 re-issue of Part 61 was supported by the Part 137 *Agricultural Aircraft Operations* Sector Risk Profile (SRP) completed in 2013. This SRP identified the need to lift training standards in the sector, leading to some significant changes for agricultural aviation participants.

To enable a smooth transition between training requirements, a period of more than a year was allowed for agricultural participants to meet the new rules. Since the changes were implemented, however, there have been cases of participants not being fully aware of what the new rules require.

Pilots

For agricultural pilots, the main impact of the changes was the introduction of more specific rating requirements. While previously the agricultural rating was all-encompassing, from April 2016, ratings were split into three specialisations: topdressing, spraying, and an aerial vertebrate toxic agent (VTA) rating. So, pilots have to be assessed in each competency rather than receiving a blanket rating.

The rule changes also affected the pilot chemical rating. A current chemical rating is now required before undergoing training for the initial Grade 1 and 2 agricultural ratings. Also, the refresher requirement for the chemical rating was increased from three to five years.

On the subject of chemicals, this is an important reminder that before undertaking any aerial spraying, ensure that the chemicals are legally approved for this type of operation.

Often this information isn't included on individual product labels. So, to check if your chemicals can be aerially sprayed, visit the Environmental Protection Authority website, www.epa.govt.nz, "Quick Links > Database search > Approved hazardous substances with controls".

Once you have entered the name of the substance and brought up its information, expand the "HSNO additional controls" section to view information about the restrictions on the use of the specific chemical.

Instructors and examiners

The introduction of an agricultural flight examiner rating was a key change for instructors from April 2016. This aligned the agricultural sector with the airline and general aviation sectors.

To become an examiner, participants must also hold a Category E flight instructor rating. Meanwhile, E-cat instructors must pass a competency assessment every two years to remain current.

Some changes to instructor privileges were also included in the rule changes. Of note is that instructors can no longer conduct competency assessments for the issue of Grade 1 or 2 agricultural pilot ratings. This privilege is restricted to agricultural flight examiners.

E-cat instructors continue to train pilots and conduct annual competency assessments. They are also able to separately issue topdressing, spraying, and aerial VTA ratings. However, the initial prime agricultural rating (which includes one of these specialised ratings), must be issued by an agricultural flight examiner.

More information

To read a more comprehensive overview of the changes, we have a guide available, *Agricultural Aircraft Operations: The effect of April 2016 changes to Part 1, Part 61 and Part 137*, at www.caa.govt.nz, "Aviation Info > Pilots".

To view Part 61 in full, see www.caa.govt.nz, "Quick Links > Rules > Part 61". To view a summary of changes made to Part 61, see Amendment 11 in "View History of Amendments". ■

