

# Part 61 *Pilot Licences and*

Changes to the recreational pilot licence (RPL), including the introduction of an RPL for helicopter pilots, will make getting a foot in the cockpit even easier. The agricultural sector will also experience significant training and rating updates.

The Part 61 re-issue came into force on 15 April 2016. Here are some of the key changes:

- » The introduction of a recreational pilot licence helicopter (RPL-H).
- » An RPL can be completed from the 'ground up' without a previous licence.
- » Student pilots can now go solo using a land transport medical certificate.
- » A new agricultural flight examiner rating.
- » More specific agricultural pilot rating requirements.

A number of other changes have been made, including the ability to perform glider tow operations with an RPL, and recognition of New Zealand Defence Force pilot qualifications in the civil aviation system.

To view Part 61, see the CAA web site, [www.caa.govt.nz](http://www.caa.govt.nz), "Rules". To view a summary of the changes, see Amendment 11 in "View History of Amendments".

## RPL-H for Helicopter Pilots

The introduction of the RPL-H will enable helicopter pilots who don't hold a class 2 medical to fly under the less stringent New Zealand Transport Agency medical certificate, called a DL9.

"The reason for not initially introducing RPL-H in parallel with the RPL fixed wing, was that there didn't seem to be any market for it," says Bill MacGregor, CAA's Principal Aviation Examiner.

"However, judging from past feedback we received after the introduction of the RPL fixed wing, and recent enquiries, the RPL-H should prove to be pretty popular.

"It's set up under the same rules and conditions as the RPL fixed wing. You can carry only one passenger, you can't fly over built-up areas, and the weight limit is set at 1500 kg – the reasoning behind that is when flying over 1500 kg, a certified ground course is required.



Photo: istockphoto.com/sierriarat

The 1500 kg weight limit for the RPL helicopter makes flying aircraft, such as an early model Hughes 500, a possibility.

# Ratings Changes

"This weight limit means that people with early model Hughes 500s, and the like, will still be able to fly their aircraft. Also importantly, we haven't limited the RPL-H to piston aircraft.

"However, you can't do sling loads under the RPL-H. Sure, deer hunting is a recreational activity, but for those who intend to go hunting, you won't be able to carry out the game underslung," explains Bill.

The operating conditions and limitations for the RPL are designed to minimise any additional risks that may arise from the lower medical standards, and mitigate the consequences if something goes wrong.

## RPL from the Ground Up

Rather than transferring from a private pilot licence (PPL) to an RPL – perhaps because of an inability to gain a class 2 medical – you can now get an RPL from the ground up.

It's wrong to view the RPL as a lesser degree of licence. To attain an RPL from scratch, a student will need to sit all the same theory exams and flight test that are required for a PPL.

A pilot who already holds a PPL, commercial pilot licence (CPL), or air transport pilot licence (ATPL), can apply for an RPL, provided they have a current DL9. This requirement still applies even if they hold a current class 1 or 2 medical certificate.

## Going Solo

For some who undergo flight training, getting into the left seat and flying their first solo circuit is the endgame.

"If all a student wants to do is go solo," says Bill, "as some people do, a class 2 medical (which is reasonably expensive) is no longer a prerequisite."

The DL9 is all that's required. That means it costs students less to go solo.

"If the student decides they want to take the professional route, for which a PPL is the start, then they must have a class 2 medical before sitting the final flight test.

"Obviously, if they're serious about flying, they'd do a class 2 medical to begin with. This way any red flags can be identified early.

"Additionally, under Part 61, we've increased the time available to gain PPL subjects up to three years, remaining valid for a three-year period. This change aligns standards with the CPL," says Bill.

## Agricultural Changes

The changes in Part 61 to the agricultural ratings and training are supported by the agricultural aviation sector risk profile completed in mid-2013. It identified the need to lift training standards.

There's a 'grandparenting' period of over a year that should enable a smooth transition period between training requirements.

"One of the most important changes is the introduction of an agricultural flight examiner," says Steve Kern, CAA's Manager Helicopter and Agricultural Operations.

The introduction of the flight examiner aligns the agricultural sector with the airline and general aviation sectors.

"We see the examiners having a key role in raising the standard of E-cats. There'll be a new E-cat competency check assessed by the flight examiners. We'll be expecting this to be a thorough and meaningful check.

"At the entrant level, the structure of the pilot chemical rating has changed. It's now a prerequisite of the agricultural rating.

"Additionally, the chemical rating refresher requirement has been increased from three to five years, which should be a big plus for industry. The intention was to line it up with approved handler's certificates.

"Following on, the agricultural rating structure has been split into three specializations: top dressing, spraying, and an aerial vertebrate toxic agent (VTA) rating."

The VTA rating is quite similar to top dressing, but there are some specific precautions that the pilot needs to know about.

"In the past, the agricultural rating was all-encompassing, but it didn't always do a good job of assessing particular areas of expertise. We'd regularly see instances where a pilot would do the most convenient competency check, but then proceed to do the bulk of their work in a different competency.

"After you do the 'prime' specialization towards your agricultural rating, you can add on one or more of the other specializations at any time by completing further training and getting the additional rating(s)," says Steve. ■

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