

SAFETY-PILOT FAR REFRESHER

Whether you need a safety pilot is one question to ask yourself before heading out for some proficiency flying. If you do, the right-seater also has to meet certain criteria. The FARs spell this out fairly well, but there can be some gray areas. The text box at right reprints FAR 91.109(c), the rule specifying the personnel and equipment requirements involving a safety pilot.

For example, if you're not IFR-current, and you file, the safety pilot is PIC for the flight. That raises some obvious concerns, not least of which can be liability if something goes wrong. It's also a concern if the flight bends a reg or three and the FAA wants to chat about it. But, as long as the weather is good VFR, filing shouldn't be an issue.

Regardless, you still need to know and understand what each other's role will be and how the FARs impact them. For example, the left-seater usually is the flight's PIC, but the right-seater is SIC and can log as second-in-command time that portion of the flight when he or she is serving as a required crewmember.

Any time two pilots are trying to fly the same aircraft at the same time, the opportunities for confusion and mayhem expand. The FARs anticipate this. You both need to understand them.

FAR 91.109(C)

No person may operate a civil aircraft in simulated instrument flight unless—

- (1) The other control seat is occupied by a safety pilot who possesses at least a private pilot certificate with category and class ratings appropriate to the aircraft being flown.
- (2) The safety pilot has adequate vision forward and to each side of the aircraft, or a competent observer in the aircraft adequately supplements the vision of the safety pilot; and
- (3) Except in the case of lighter-than-air aircraft, that aircraft is equipped with fully functioning dual controls. However, simulated instrument flight may be conducted in a single-engine airplane, equipped with a single, functioning, throwover control wheel, in place of fixed, dual controls of the elevator and ailerons, when—
 - (i) The safety pilot has determined that the flight can be conducted safely; and
 - (ii) The person manipulating the controls has at least a private pilot certificate with appropriate category and class ratings.