



SPORT PILOT/LIGHT-SPORT AIRCRAFT AT TWO YEARS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2006 — ANALYSIS BY TOPIC

New production aircraft (S-LSA)

Analysis/outlook: Outstanding. In less than two years, the industry went from final rule to more than three dozen new production aircraft, with more in the pipeline. These aircraft are currently priced at one-half to one-quarter of the cost of a traditional small production aircraft. In addition, during EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2006, Cessna unveiled its proof-of-concept light-sport aircraft and announced it is studying entry into the LSA marketplace. As the industry and market develops, there are also expectations of even lower-priced aircraft — still built to ASTM standards — becoming available.

New kit aircraft (E-LSA)

Analysis/outlook: Improved over 2005. The final ASTM standards for light-sport aircraft kit assembly are completed, but they have yet to be published in the Federal Register. Once this is done, the standards will be ready for new kit designs.

Transition of aircraft from two-place ultralight trainer to E-LSA

Analysis/outlook: Improving after a slow start. An initial shortage of designated airworthiness representatives (DARs) in this category is being overcome, which complicated efforts to transition to the light-sport aircraft category. A new online course, developed jointly by EAA and FAA, allows amateur-built DARs to easily add the light-sport aircraft rating to their current ratings. EAA has also assisted by developing and distributing more than 1,200 ultralight transition kits. Despite some pockets of resistance, the process is moving forward toward the January 2008 transition deadline.

Pilot certification

Analysis/outlook: Solid. The written test material is completed and available from FAA and private companies. More than 2,000 sport pilot student certificates have been issued, many of them as a free benefit to EAA members that saved them an average of \$100 each. Designated Pilot Examiner totals are growing as well, giving potential sport pilots the opportunities to complete their training and earn their certificates.

Availability of instructors/aircraft

Analysis/outlook: Good and bad, similar to 2005. Existing CFIs may instruct sport pilots, and FAA has authorized many new Sport Pilot Instructors (SPIs) in the past year. That number will continue to increase significantly. Finding training aircraft at flight schools is still difficult, however, and the cause of a bottleneck in the process. All parties must work to remedy this situation.

Repairman-Inspection (LS-I)

Analysis/outlook: Solid and growing. FAA's guidance and involvement has already led to more than a dozen providers that have scheduled courses for this rating. The resources are available for those who wish to obtain this rating.

Repairman-Maintenance (LS-M)

Analysis/outlook: Still slow. EAA and the industry have worked with FAA on revisions to the policy, which originally hindered progress in this area. At this point, only one school is approved to offer the training. EAA is encouraging current airframe and powerplant (A & P) maintenance schools and training centers to provide this training and help clear the roadblock on this matter.

Insurance

Analysis/outlook: Improving, but with additional education needed in some areas. As mentioned in 2005, brokers and underwriters, led by Falcon Insurance, have created liability and hull coverage for light-sport airplanes. Coverage is not yet available, however, for powered parachutes and weight-shift control aircraft. Many of the difficulties regarding insurance for LSAs have emerged because of compatibility issues in other areas, such as tailwheel instruction or unmet standards for flight schools. Sport pilots and light-sport aircraft owners can also encounter individual aviation insurers unfamiliar with the details of sport pilot and light-sport aircraft. The picture promises to improve even more as the sport pilot community expands.

Overall

Analysis/outlook: A solid year of growth and the promise of even more progress. In just two years, sport pilot/light-sport aircraft is rapidly becoming a part of the recreational aviation community. The complexities of an entirely new rule and marketplace are not without challenges and occasional slow spots, but government, industry and consumers are showing solid and growing support for the possibilities in this sector of flight. There is still more work to do in several areas, including training aircraft, medical certification, and maintenance, among others. The sport pilot/light-sport aircraft rule, however, has created new aircraft, new pilots and an increased interest in aviation as safe, affordable and fun outdoor recreation that offers satisfaction like no other pursuit. The continued success of this rule is dependent on advancement as a total package in all areas. EAA will continue its work to build on the dramatic successes made in just two years within this new sport pilot community.