

British Gliding Association – Medical Fitness Requirements Briefing Notes for Pilots

Introduction

The BGA Executive has approved new medical requirements for glider pilots. These will be effective from 1st March 2003 and affect all glider pilots.

A summary of the new requirements is given in the attached sheet, headed BGA Medical Requirements. Further guidance is provided in the document “Guidance Notes on the Medical Fitness Required for Glider Pilots”, dated 5th February 2003 by Dr Peter Saundby. Copies of these are available from the BGA Office and for download from the BGA web site.

This document gives the background to these new medical requirements and attempts to answer some common questions.

Why Is There a Need for New Requirements?

In the UK, the control of all aspects of gliding has been exercised by the BGA since 1931. In 1967, following a serious accident, a medical declaration was introduced and this has resulted in a level of safety comparable with other areas of aviation. The recent creation of the European Aviation Safety Agency has, however, placed a focus on various safety related aspects of civil aviation, including gliding.

The BGA has decided to align its medical documentation with the new National Private Pilots Licence. These are, themselves, based on the BGA’s current requirements with some modifications.

The BGA believes that by taking this small step now, together with moves with the other member associations of the Royal Aero Club in relation to EASA, it is demonstrating continuing competence in establishing the medical fitness of glider pilots.

The potential risks to third parties, in a world that is becoming ever more litigious, mean that the BGA and member clubs have to act responsibly. The current system, whereby a pilot’s self declaration could exist for life, with no renewal required or medical endorsement enforced, did not display the levels of responsibility which the public might reasonably expect.

What Are the New Requirements?

These follow DVLA standards. For all solo glider pilots it is DVLA Group 1 (private drivers) and, for instructors, DVLA Group 2 (professional drivers). There is also an age limitation for instructors.

Full details of the standards are available on the DVLA web site at:

www.dvla.gov.uk/at_a_glance/content.htm

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The major change (from 1st March 2003) over the current requirements is that pilots **must** obtain a GP endorsement to their declaration of fitness to fly. This requirement is compliant with a recent Air Accident Investigation Branch recommendation and is to confirm the honesty of the declaration. It does not change the standard of fitness required. The GP must have access to the pilot's medical record, but no examination is required. The GP may charge a fee for this.

How Long Does a Declaration Remain Valid?

A glider pilot must declare and obtain a GP endorsement of fitness to fly before first flying solo. This declaration remains valid until age 45, at which time a new declaration, must be made. Again, GP endorsement is required.

Declarations must then be renewed (with a GP endorsement) at ages 45, 50, 55, 60, and 65, then annually. A renewal is also required before a pilot flies after a serious illness.

It is recommended that declarations be renewed in the month before they expire.

Are There Any Transitional Arrangements?

Existing declarations remain valid until the pilot reaches a birthday at which a renewal is required under the new rules. For example, a pilot aged 17 does not need to comply with the new rules until reaching the age of 45; a pilot aged 52 need not comply until 55; etc. Pilots with specific medical limitations will continue to be managed on a case-by-case basis.

What about Ab Initio Pilots?

Pre solo pilots continue to self declare, as at present. However, clubs and students should note that a self declaration to DVLA Group 1 with the GP endorsement is required **before** the first solo flight can be undertaken (wef 1st March 2003).

What about Instructors?

As at present, instructors (in gliders) must certify to DVLA Group 2 standards and have this declaration endorsed by a GP. Renewals are at the same frequency as for solo pilots above. Professional instructors are still required to hold a JAA Class 2 medical certificate under CAA rules.

If an instructor cannot meet DVLA Group 2 standards, but can meet Group 1 standards, or is 70 or over, that instructor can continue as a Restricted Instructor (see below) subject to the consent of the Senior Regional Examiner.

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An instructor who wishes to continue unrestricted instructing after age 70 must hold a JAA Class 2 medical certificate, as at present.

The restricted instructor rating requires DVLA group 1 standards to be met (and endorsed by a GP). Restricted instructors may undertake ground training and advanced instruction where the pupil pilot could reasonably be expected to make a successful landing following any incapacity of the instructor.

Is my Club Free to Set its Own Standards?

BGA member clubs remain free to impose any medical standards that they wish, as long as the minimum standards above are met.

These notes are intended for general guidance only and must not be considered as the definitive statement on BGA medical requirements. For these, see the document "Guidance Notes on the Medical Fitness Required for Glider Pilots" by Dr Peter Saundby.