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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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### **What are the requirements to become a volunteer pilot?**

- Have an interest in environmental issues.
- Have logged at least 1,000 hours as Pilot in Command (PIC) with an excellent safety record.
- Own a suitable aircraft.
- Maintain at least \$1 million / \$100K liability coverage and provide annually a Certificate of Insurance with a 10-day notice of cancellation clause to LightHawk. Additionally, LightHawk must be named as an additional insured on this policy. (See more about insurance below.)
- Execute and return a Volunteer Pilot Agreement to LightHawk. This agreement states that the pilot is not an employee or agent of LightHawk and is acting on his/her own behalf.
- Provide a copy of your private, commercial or ATP certificate.
- Provide a copy of your medical certificate. Pilots must have a current third class or higher medical certificate when flying LightHawk missions.
- Provide us with the names of two or more references that we may contact, at least one of which is a pilot who has flown with you recently.
- Complete an orientation interview with an experienced LightHawk volunteer pilot and LightHawk staff.
- Provide photographs of the inside and outside of your aircraft and a photograph of yourself.
- Agree to complete and keep current all necessary paperwork associated with being a LightHawk pilot. This includes updating your pilot file annually and completing trip reports promptly after all flights.

### **What happens during an orientation interview?**

An experienced LightHawk pilot and two or three LightHawk staff members will meet with you by phone to talk about the organization, our flight planning process, expectations, paperwork, and reporting needs. We discuss what you can expect as a LightHawk volunteer and emphasize your role as the PIC and sole operating authority on these flights. You also will learn about the various flight profiles that are common and we will discuss working with photographers and reporters. Generally, LightHawk wants to determine that you are passenger-oriented in your flying, that you have a good understanding of how LightHawk works and what to expect on a flight, and that you and your plane can represent LightHawk in a professional manner.

### **Why does LightHawk require 1,000 hours when other volunteer pilot organizations require less?**

Most charitable volunteer pilot organizations are transportation oriented, designed to move people or cargo between airports in flight profiles common from your first day of flying. In contrast, LightHawk flights are generally scenic in nature and may require the pilot to fly near terrain and at lower altitudes (still around 1,000' agl), maneuver for views of specific points on the ground, and in other ways fly flight profiles that are more challenging and less common than straight-line transport. After a significant amount of time flying, pilots have had exposure to a much wider variety of situations and have gained the expertise and confidence to say "no", as well as to appropriately divide attention between flying and other demands. While any time requirement can be labeled "arbitrary", LightHawk's requirement is based on a number of respected statistical analyses of General Aviation safety, and has been upheld consistently by our board as the membership requirement for volunteer pilots. A majority of our volunteers substantially exceed this minimum requirement.

### **What insurance is required to fly my aircraft for LightHawk?**

- (1) You must have USD 1 million in liability coverage per occurrence, with a minimum of USD 100,000 per person.
- (2) LightHawk must be listed as an "additional insured" on your policy (please see additional FAQs on this subject).
- (3) We would appreciate it if you would request a 10-day notice of cancellation clause on the policy that requires your insurance underwriter to notify LightHawk if the policy lapses for any reason.

LightHawk represents to its partners and all passengers only two things about a LightHawk volunteer pilot: (a) that you have at least 1,000 hours of PIC flight experience and (b) that you possess insurance to cover passengers in the event of an accident.

### **How does the "additional insured" requirement work? Will it cost more?**

LightHawk requires that you add us to your policy as an "additional insured" primarily so that our legal defense costs are covered if we are sued because you had an accident. Part 135 operators who do any government flying will be familiar with this and may already have multiple additional insureds on their policy. It is increasingly becoming standard for all pilots to have to add additional insureds such as airports and hangar owners.

All legal expenses (your own and those of any additional insured parties) for litigation related to an accident are covered *in addition to* the liability limits in your policy. There is generally no limit on the amount the insurance company can spend defending itself against the claim, and this expense doesn't reduce your liability coverage. The cost of the claim settlement itself is what is charged against your liability limits.

The only time adding an additional insured to your policy might affect your financial exposure is if the additional insured were deemed to be negligent in an accident. As the PIC, however, you are 100% responsible for the flight, and the circumstances under which LightHawk could be assigned any portion of the negligence associated with an accident in your aircraft are very difficult to imagine. This is one of the reasons LightHawk rigorously avoids placing itself in any position where it could be seen as the "controller" or "operator" of the flights -- instead, LightHawk constantly reinforces your role as the PIC and your responsibility for all aspects of flights, preserving the integrity of your insurance.

There is usually no increase in premiums associated with adding LightHawk as an additional insured, but it varies by broker and underwriter and can also depend on what you think LightHawk flights are all about and how you communicate about LightHawk with your insurance broker. Most LightHawk flights should correspond to what is commonly called a "scenic flight," a fair-weather daytime mission, usually at or above 1,000 agl. Terminology such as "air survey" or "resource recon" can have connotations or commercial definitions that imply a much more aggressive type of low-level flying than should be characteristic of LightHawk flights and can influence what your insurance company understands LightHawk's mission to be.

### **Does LightHawk have its own aircraft?**

LightHawk currently owns and operates a C206, which is operated primarily in Central America and Mexico from January through May each year. This aircraft may be deployed in other regions as needed. In addition, LightHawk owns a C185 and a C207, which are used in specialized situations where volunteer-owned aircraft are not available or are impractical. The C206 is currently based near Phoenix, the C207 is currently based in Tucson, and the C185 is currently based in Sun Valley, ID. Volunteer pilots who meet both our insurance and experience qualifications fly these aircraft.

### **What are the requirements to fly LightHawk's aircraft?**

You must be a current LightHawk volunteer pilot, have 25 hours in the make/model, and have an instrument rating. For our C185, 250 hours of tail wheel time are required plus 25 hours make/model.

Note that these are *minimums* for insurance purposes. LightHawk generally seeks pilots with significantly greater time and similar flight profile experience to fly these aircraft. See Latin America experience guidelines ("Can I fly for LightHawk in Latin America?") below.

### **Am I covered by LightHawk's insurance when I fly LightHawk's aircraft?**

If a VP has an accident in LightHawk's aircraft, LightHawk's aircraft coverage is the primary insurance for hull damage and liability. However, in some cases a VP may still have liability exposure beyond the liability coverage of the policy. This is true whenever you fly an aircraft you do not own. Therefore, carrying your own non-owned aircraft liability insurance is strongly recommended, though not required, for pilots who fly LightHawk's aircraft.

### **Can I fly a jet aircraft for LightHawk?**

Pilots with a minimum of 1,000 hours PIC time in airplanes, 500 of which are PIC time in jets, can fly specific LightHawk missions in a jet airplane. Additionally, a VP must have 200 hours of PIC time in the make and model jet to be used for the LightHawk flight, and must have logged 25 hours PIC time in the make and model during the previous 90 days. An instrument rating and currency are required, and additional insurance requirements may be necessary.

### **Can I fly my certificated seaplane or ski-equipped plane for LightHawk?**

Pilots with a minimum of 1,000 hours PIC time, a seaplane rating, and at least 100 water landings may fly LightHawk missions involving a water takeoff or landing. Similarly, pilots with a minimum of 1,000 hours PIC time and at least 100 ski landings may fly LightHawk missions involving a takeoff or landing with a ski-equipped aircraft. Naturally, the aircraft will have to have FAA-approved float or ski installations, and it will still be up to the pilot in command whether to land on water, snow or ice based upon the current conditions.

### **Can I fly my certificated helicopter for LightHawk?**

Pilots with a minimum of 1,000 hours total PIC time, which may be in a mix of fixed wing or rotorcraft may fly LightHawk missions with a few additional requirements. The pilot must have at least 500 hours PIC time in rotorcraft. They must have at least 100 hours total time in the helicopter make and model proposed for the mission, with at least 10 of those hours obtained within the past 90 days. Finally, they may fly certificated helicopter models only, complying with all legally required inspections and Airworthiness Directives.

### **Can I fly my light sport aircraft (LSA) for LightHawk?**

Pilots with a minimum of 1000 hours PIC time, private or higher pilot certification and a current third class or higher medical certificate may fly LightHawk missions in light sport aircraft that were factory-built to ASTM standards and bear the airworthiness classification "Light Sport."

### **Can I fly my experimental plane, balloon, or glider for LightHawk?**

LightHawk currently excludes balloons and gliders from our operations due to the liability concerns they raise in the volunteer environment. In addition, aircraft such as gliders and balloons are, by their flight characteristics, usually not suitable for most flight requests we receive.

Experimental aircraft are currently allowed if the pilot has 1,000 hours of PIC time in the appropriate category and class and if there are no passengers aboard. Some of our pilots currently fly solo to assist conservation groups, and we will allow this type of flight as long as the pilot is alone in the experimental aircraft.

### **Can I become a LightHawk pilot if I don't own a plane?**

In some instances, but this is usually discouraged. LightHawk has a few members of its volunteer pilot corps who do not own planes or who do not carry insurance minimums on their plane and therefore cannot use them for LightHawk flights. Almost all these pilots are qualified to fly LightHawk's owned

aircraft in Latin America and our other regions. At present, LightHawk is primarily recruiting pilots with their own aircraft since they have substantially greater flexibility in their ability to respond to flight requests and to the schedule changes that frequently occur.

### **What are the insurance requirements for using a rented or borrowed aircraft to fly LightHawk missions?**

There are important steps that must be taken before you can fly a rented or borrowed aircraft for LightHawk, and these steps are difficult to complete without adequate lead-time. If your own aircraft is Inoperable, renting or borrowing on short notice is not usually an option.

In advance of flying a rented or borrowed aircraft, you will need to provide LightHawk with proof of insurance that demonstrates that you, as the user, and any passengers aboard are covered to the same liability limits required to be carried on aircraft owned by LightHawk volunteer pilots (USD 1 million per incident, \$100,000 minimum per person). In addition, LightHawk must be named as an "additional insured," just as is required for pilots who fly their own planes.

Pilots who rent usually handle this by acquiring a renters or non-owned aircraft liability policy. LightHawk must be added to their renter's policy as an additional insured.

### **Does LightHawk require passengers to sign a liability release?**

Yes, LightHawk requires that all U.S. citizens on flights flown by LightHawk VPs sign a liability release before taking a flight. The LightHawk program manager will usually handle this in advance of the flight. If there are last-minute passenger changes or additions, pilots will be informed by the program manager if they need to take additional action to obtain signed forms. Liability release forms are not currently required for non-U.S. citizens on LightHawk flights in Latin America.

### **Can a volunteer pilot be reimbursed for fuel or other expenses incurred in flying a LightHawk mission?**

Usually, all expenses associated with flying a LightHawk mission in the volunteer pilot's own aircraft are borne by the pilot as part of the volunteer donation. There are some exceptions, as indicated below for various classes of expenses.

Direct flight expenses include fuel and oil costs, landing fees, tie-down fees, aircraft rental fees, and similar expenses. Unless specifically authorized by the FAR's and your insurance policy, volunteer pilots are not legally eligible for direct expense reimbursement.

Indirect flight expenses include ground transportation, food, lodging, and similar expenses that may be associated with completing a LightHawk flight mission, but are not directly connected with operating an aircraft. All volunteer pilots are legally eligible to receive reimbursement of such indirect flight expenses and LightHawk sometimes provides reimbursement for such expenses (usually in the case of multi-day tours outside your home area). *Any such reimbursements must be pre-authorized by the LightHawk program manager coordinating the mission.*

Excluded expenses include depreciation, depletion of maintenance reserves, insurance costs, hangar costs, or other costs of ownership pro-rated over the life of the aircraft or a year. These expenses cannot be reimbursed.

To receive reimbursement for pre-authorized expenses, your original expense receipts must be attached to and itemized on your Pilot Expense Report Form, which is turned in with your Pilot Daily Trip Report Form to your program manager after your flight. After receiving these, LightHawk will issue you a check for those approved expenses. Please ask the program manager coordinating your flight for more detailed information and appropriate forms.

### **Can a volunteer pilot get a tax deduction for expenses incurred in flying a LightHawk mission?**

All *direct* flight expenses such as fuel and landing fees can be deducted unless you are receiving reimbursement for them. *Indirect* flight expenses and *excluded* flight expenses cannot be deducted (see previous question for definitions of direct, indirect, and excluded flight expenses). *Be sure to check with your accountant or tax advisor for the most current information on tax deductions for your specific situation.*

To receive documentation of your in-kind donation of direct expenses for tax purposes, please note the following:

\* Each pilot automatically receives, in February, a letter from LightHawk documenting total hours flown on LightHawk missions in the preceding year. For most of you, this will suffice for deducting the cost of fuel expenses, which can be estimated for your aircraft by multiplying average fuel consumption by total hours.

\* If you wish to also receive documentation of other direct expenses such as landing or tie-down fees directly associated with flying a LightHawk mission, your original qualified expense receipts must be attached to and itemized on your Pilot Expense Report Form, which is turned in with your Pilot Daily Trip Report Form to your program manager after your flight. After receiving these, LightHawk will issue you a letter you can use for tax purposes. For more detailed information and appropriate forms, please talk with the program manager coordinating your flight.

### **Where does LightHawk fly?**

LightHawk's administrative headquarters are in Lander, Wyoming. The organization's regions of operation are:

**Mesoamerica:** Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Mexico

**Rocky Mountain Region:** Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and Alberta, Canada

**Pacific Region:** California, Washington, Oregon and Baja; limited operations in Alaska and British Columbia, Canada

**Eastern Region:** New England and the eastern seaboard states including Florida

**Other regions:** LightHawk also flies in other areas of the United States and Caribbean on a case by case basis. For flights in these areas or general information contact LightHawk headquarters, [info@lighthawk.org](mailto:info@lighthawk.org), (307) 332-3242.

### **Can I fly for LightHawk in regions other than my home region?**

LightHawk occasionally seeks volunteer pilots who are willing to fly outside their home region and have sufficient experience and appropriate equipment for conditions that may involve mountain, remote area or over-water flying. Some considerations associated with flying in different regions are outlined below. In addition, see special criteria for flying for LightHawk in Latin America. If you are interested in flying in another region and feel you have the appropriate experience and skills, please contact the program manager for that region to begin a discussion.

#### *Mountain flying conditions*

Pilots flying missions in mountainous areas of the Rockies and Pacific regions should have substantial experience with:

- Weather considerations unique to mountainous areas

- Density altitude and its effects on allowable take-off weight and rate of climb
- Mountain wave activity and turbulence
- Higher performance aircraft (235 horsepower or better or turbo-power)

#### *Other special flying conditions*

Pilots may encounter less familiar flying conditions and may need to cope with new distractions in large congested urban areas under constant ATC control; in remote areas; or during low altitude flying and flights for surveys or photo documentation. Desirable assets might include:

- Excellent radio skills
- Ability to navigate by dead-reckoning (ATC, nav-aid coverage, and GPS acquisition is limited in remote or rugged terrain)
- Short/soft field techniques
- Survival equipment and supplies
- Long periods of slow flight
- Ability to open a window or remove a door

#### **Can I fly for LightHawk in Latin America?**

LightHawk seeks volunteer pilots to fly their own aircraft or LightHawk's aircraft in Latin America who have a minimum of two and usually three or more of the following characteristics.

- Have substantial experience flying in one or more countries of Latin America
- Have substantial experience flying for LightHawk and can function as needed in many of the same roles a LightHawk program manager usually plays,
- Speak Spanish,
- Have substantial experience in the aircraft to be used (well above the 25 hour insurance minimum) -- OR -- are based with your aircraft in Latin America or able to fly own aircraft down.
- Have a flexible schedule and are able to go on tours for 2+ weeks at a time.
- Possess adequate insurance coverage for the countries of Latin America

If you feel you meet the requirements, please begin a discussion with the Mesoamerica Program Manager or Pilot Outreach Manager well in advance of when you might be interested in going.

#### **Does LightHawk do transportation flights?**

No, LightHawk does not usually conduct transportation flights, meaning a flight whose purpose is to move people from point A to point B. There are some rare exceptions to this, which can be discussed with the program manager coordinating the flight.

#### **Can LightHawk install camera mounts for aerial photography?**

LightHawk does not mount any external camera or tracking equipment to our own planes. In some cases our volunteer pilots can install camera or tracking equipment to their aircraft, but an FAA approval in the form of a Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) is required as well as insurance policy acceptance. Missions that require this type of equipment are better arranged through a professional charter operator specialized in this area.

#### **Does LightHawk fly minors?**

LightHawk flights do not usually carry individuals under the age of 18. Exceptions to this are possible if the minor is accompanied by at least one parent on the flight.

#### **Does LightHawk donate flights for charity events such as silent auctions?**

Rarely. Flights for charity events require special compliance with Part 91.146 of the FAA rules.

### **What services do LightHawk program managers provide?**

- Within regions, establish issue and area priorities for LightHawk
- Screen missions and partners
- Initiate multi-partner collaborations and events
- Help plan major flight programs for extended campaigns
- Serve as the volunteer pilots' main point of contact with LightHawk
- Educate and support conservation partners:
  - route and mission planning
  - use of briefings and maps
  - selection of passengers
  - media flights
  - complex multi-flight events integrated with ground activities
  - flight guide development and training
  - technical missions (survey, satellite groundtruthing, aerial photography)
- Make connections:
  - technical experts
  - media
  - guides
  - images
  - organizations