



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

Commandant  
U. S. Coast Guard  
Inspections and Compliance Directorate  
2703 Martin Luther King JR Ave, SE, Stop 7501  
Washington, DC 20593-7501

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## Parasailing - Flight Safety and Rules

Last summer, there were two incidents where aircraft towing banners (banner tows) collided with parasail rigs aloft that were being towed by small passenger vessels. Fortunately, there were no passenger injuries, only property damage, but these incidents could have resulted in serious injury or a fatality. This MSIB outlines the applicable regulations and provides guidance to promote safety of parasailing while operating with passengers aloft in the vicinity of banner tow or other aircraft operations.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates both parasail and banner tow *flight* operations. The U. S. Coast Guard (USCG) regulates small passenger vessels that conduct parasail operations, however, does not have dedicated regulations applicable to parasailing equipment or flight, therefore, does not regulate those specific aspects of passenger vessel operations. To avoid the risk of collision and/or near misses with other aircraft, parasail operators are reminded to maintain awareness of aircraft flying within their proximity and to ensure parasail flight is conducted within the altitude limits set by the FAA. Furthermore, given that parasail vessels are limited, both in their ability to maneuver and in maneuvering the parasail aloft, vessel operators are reminded to be especially proactive and vigilant in maintaining passenger safety aloft while in the vicinity of aircraft, such as banner planes. Be advised that the banner-in-tow, attached to a banner plane, may hang 100 - 150 feet below the banner plane itself, and, the pilot may not be able to see the parasail aloft due to there being a blind spot directly ahead of and below the plane. Passenger safety while in parasail flight is of utmost concern to both agencies, and the aforementioned incidents give reason to recap the rules governing both parasail and banner tow flight (see enclosures 1 and 2).

The FAA concluded that parasails and parasail operations are subject to regulations applicable to *kites* under Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 101, and, therefore, has prescribed certain *operating (flight) limitations* and *notice and marking requirements*. Parasail operators who need to deviate from these *limitations* and *requirements* must request and receive approved *waivers* for parasail flight from the nearest [FAA Service Center](#) (see enclosure 1). Commonly requested and waived regulations include 14 CFR 101.13 (a)(4), 14 CFR 101.15, and 14 CFR 101.17. Additionally, when requesting waivers, parasail operators should maintain a copy of their waiver request as evidence of submission. This may be used for compliance purposes until the waiver arrives. To promote maritime and aviation safety, parasail and banner tow operators, who fly within common geographic areas, are encouraged to be proactive in meeting with each other through regular safety meetings, especially before the start of each operating season.

For questions regarding this matter, contact the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance, Domestic Vessels Division (CG-CVC-1) at **202-372-1216** during regular business hours or by email at **CG-CVC-1@uscg.mil**.

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- Enclosure (1) Synopsis of FAA regulations for parasail and banner tow flight dated November 2014  
(2) Safety Alert for [Banner Tow] Operators (SAFO) 15002 dated 16Jan2015



## **November 2014**

### **Applicable FAA parasail (kite) regulations:**

14 CFR § 101.3, Waivers: No person may conduct operations that require a deviation from this part except under a certificate of waiver issued by the Administrator [**Notes 1 & 2**].

14 CFR § 101.7, Hazardous Operations:

(a) No person may operate any moored balloon, kite, amateur rocket, or unmanned free balloon in a manner that creates a hazard to other persons, or their property. (b) No person operating any moored balloon, kite, amateur rocket, or unmanned free balloon may allow an object to be dropped there from, if such action creates a hazard to other persons or their property.

14 CFR § 101.13 (a), Operating Limitations: No person may operate a kite (1) Less than 500 feet from the base of any cloud; (2) More than 500 feet above the surface of the earth; (3) From an area where the ground visibility is less than three miles; or (4) Within five miles of the boundary of an airport.

14 CFR § 101.15, Notice Requirements [**Note 3**]: No person may operate a kite more than 150 feet above the surface of the earth, unless, at least 24 hours before beginning the operation, the following information is provided to the FAA Air Traffic Control (ATC) facility that is nearest to the place of intended operation: (a) the names and addresses of the owners and operators, (b) the size of the balloon or the size and weight of the kite, (c) the location of the operation, (d) the height above the surface of the earth at which the balloon or kite is to be operated, and (e) the date, time, and duration of the operation.

14 CFR § 101.17, Marking Requirements: No person may operate a kite between sunrise and sunset unless its mooring lines have colored pennants or streamers attached at not more than 50 foot intervals beginning at 150 feet above the surface of the earth and visible for at least one mile.

### **Applicable FAA banner tow aircraft regulations:**

Banner tow flights are conducted in Visual Flight Rules (VFR) conditions only. VFR operations require pilots to 'SEE and AVOID' other aircraft. All banner tow operations require a certificate of waiver. A banner tow operator must comply with the terms and conditions of the certificate of waiver including minimum altitude limits or other restrictions exceeding the regulatory standards in 14 CFR.

14 CFR § 91.13(a), Careless or reckless operation: No person may operate an aircraft in a careless or reckless manner so as to endanger the life or property of another.

14 CFR § 91.119(c), Minimum safe altitudes, Over other than congested areas: An aircraft must maintain an altitude of 500 feet above the surface, except over open water or sparsely populated areas. In those cases, the aircraft may not be operated closer than 500 feet to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure [**Notes 4 & 5**].

14 CFR § 91.311, Towing: Other than under §91.309. No pilot of a civil aircraft may tow anything with that aircraft (other than under §91.309) except in accordance with the terms of a Certificate of Waiver issued by the Administrator.

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**Note 1:** Certificate of Waiver: Certificates of Waiver are issued for one year. As a practical matter, parasail operators may need to deviate from the Operating Limitations of 14 CFR § 101.13, Notice Requirements of 14 CFR § 101.15 and/or the Marking Requirements of 14 CFR § 101.17, and, if so, would be required to obtain a Certificate of Waiver, in accordance with 14 CFR § 101.3, to fly a parasail.

**Note 2:** Certificate of Waiver application: Waiver applications shall be made by through FAA Service Centers.

Eastern Service Center	Robin Smith	robin.smith@faa.gov
Central Service Center	Joseph Pilgrim	joseph.pilgrim@faa.gov
Western Service Center	Robert Gegen	robert.ctr.gegen@faa.gov

**Note 3:** Providing daily notification: Unless waived through the waiver process, parasail operators that fly above 150 feet shall provide daily notification, at least 24 hours in advance, to the nearest Air Traffic Control (ATC) facility, of their intended flight operations. Coordination with your nearest ATC facility is encouraged. Parasail operators should contact their respective ATC facility staff to determine the preferred method of notification.

**Note 4:** 500 foot separation: The ocean is considered open water; therefore, no minimum altitude exists over the ocean. However, banner tow aircraft, including the banner-in-tow (which is considered part of the aircraft), must maintain a minimum separation distance of at least 500 feet from any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure (including a parasail rig aloft), in accordance with 14 §CFR 91.119 (c).

**Note 5:** To report suspected violations of FAA regulations: contact the nearest Flight Standards District Office (FSDO).



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

SAFO 15002  
DATE: 1/16/15

Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/safo](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo)

*A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. SAFO content should be especially valuable to air carriers in meeting their statutory duty to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be as effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO.*

**Subject:** Aircraft Banner Tow Operations in the Vicinity of Parasail Operations

**Purpose:** This SAFO highlights regulations, guidance, and best practices for safe aircraft banner tow operations in the vicinity of parasail operations.

**Background:** Two recent midair collisions between banner tow aircraft and parasail rigs in flight could have resulted in injury or death. In addition, on June 18, 2014, the National Transportation Safety Board published Special Investigation Report (SIR), Parasailing Safety (NTSB/SIR-14/02 PB2014-106341) that chronicled the history of banner tow aircraft and parasail collisions. The SIR recommended that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) take appropriate action in coordination with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to reduce associated hazards.

**Discussion:** The FAA and USCG share responsibility in mitigating the risk of collision between parasails and banner tow aircraft. In certain locations, these operations may occur within close proximity along populated beach areas. The FAA regulates both banner tow and parasail flight operations. Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 91, § 91.311 provides for the issuance of a certificate of waiver for aircraft banner tow operations. Parasails and parasail operations are subject to regulations applicable to kites under 14 CFR part 101 and may not be operated in a manner that creates a hazard. The USCG regulates the operation and safety of water borne vessels that conduct parasail operations on federally navigable waterways.

The USCG and FAA strongly encourage communication and cooperation amongst parasail and banner tow operators in areas where these operations occur in close proximity.

As a reminder, the following FAA regulations apply to aircraft banner tow operations<sup>1</sup>:

14 CFR § 91.13(a), *Careless or reckless operation*

14 CFR § 91.119(c), *Minimum safe altitudes, Over other than congested areas*

14 CFR § 91.311, *Towing: Other than under § 91.309*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=14:2.0.1.3.10&rgn=div5#14:2.0.1.3.10.2.4.10>

**Recommended Action:** Banner tow operators should adhere to the following guidelines and comply with applicable regulations in 14 CFR:

- All banner tow operations require an FAA certificate of waiver to operate. A banner tow operator must comply with the terms and conditions of the certificate of waiver including minimum altitudes or other restrictions exceeding the regulatory standards in 14 CFR.
- Before issuance of a certificate of waiver, an FAA safety inspector must ensure the pilot is competent to perform banner tow operations. At least one pickup and drop of the largest banner (i.e. the maximum number of letters/panels) to be used by the operator must be demonstrated. Operators must not tow banners larger than demonstrated to the FAA.
- Banner tow flights may operate in Visual Flight Rules (VFR) conditions only. VFR operations require pilots to 'SEE and AVOID' other aircraft, reference § 91.113.
- Banner tow aircraft (and the banner) must not be operated closer than 500 feet from any person, vessel (including a parasail held aloft), vehicle, or structure when operating over other than congested areas, reference § 91.119(c).
- No person may operate an aircraft in a careless or reckless manner so as to endanger the life or property of another.
- Parasail vessels typically operate at speeds of 10 knots or less and are engaged in flying passengers aloft maximizing wind direction to ensure safe passenger flight. Their ability to maneuver is limited by both their slow speed and prevailing wind direction.
- Before high activity seasons, banner tow and parasailing operators within a common geographic area are encouraged to coordinate regular safety meetings and/or contact the local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) to coordinate ad hoc meetings. Participation of local FAA Air Traffic and USCG officials is highly encouraged.
- Banner tow operators should include this SAFO in initial and recurrent training for pilots. Report suspected violations of FAA flight rules, by contacting the nearest FSDO:  
[http://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/field\\_offices/fsdo/](http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/field_offices/fsdo/)

**Contact:** Questions or comments regarding this SAFO should be directed to the General Aviation and Commercial Division, AFS-800, at 202-267-1100.