

# Advisory Circular

## AC103-1

Revision 6  
5 April 2025

### Microlight Aircraft—Operating Rules

#### General

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Advisory Circulars (ACs) contain information about standards, practices and procedures that the Authority has found to be an **acceptable means of compliance** with the associated rule.

Consideration will be given to other methods of compliance that may be presented to the Authority. When new standards, practices or procedures are found to be acceptable they will be added to the appropriate AC.

#### Purpose

This AC describes an acceptable means of compliance with Civil Aviation Rule Part 103 – *Microlight Aircraft Operating Rules*.

#### Related Rules

This AC relates to the operating rules for microlight aircraft under Part 103.

#### Change Notice

Revision 6 makes updates to align with redrafted rules under the Civil Aviation Act 2023 (CA Act 2023), adds contact details and makes minor formatting and style changes to align with current AC format.

#### Version History

The record of revisions to this AC are outlined below:

AC Revision No.	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
AC103-1, Rev 0	11 February 1993	Initial issue of this AC

Published by  
Civil Aviation Authority  
PO Box 3555  
Wellington 6140

Authorised by  
DCE Aviation Safety

AC103-1, Rev 1A	1 April 1997	Cancels AC103-1 and provides methods acceptable to the Authority for showing compliance with Subparts A and G of Part 103.
AC103-1, Rev 2	9 May 2000	Changed the definitions of a microlight aircraft in the specifications.
AC103-1, Rev 3	9 November 2012	Amended the specifications for an aircraft that meets the microlight aircraft definition and added information on acceptable means of compliance.
AC103-1, Rev 4	7 October 2021	Added additional information relating to the authorisation to conduct a re-inspection and re-assessment of a microlight at the incorporation of a modification, and reference to the process of operating engines beyond the manufacturer's TBO.  Clarified advice on rule 103.217(d), (e) and (f).  Added this Version History.
AC103-1, Rev 5	14 November 2023	Added a note about payloads in the General section.  Clarified sections on rules 103.103, 103.207(a)91), option 2, and 103.217.  Updated style and format to align with current AC format.
AC103-1, Rev 6	5 April 2025	Updates to align with redrafted rules under the CA Act 2023.  Adds contact details.  Minor formatting and style changes to align with current AC format.

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## 1. General

The definition of a microlight aircraft from Part 1 is below for easy reference:

*a basic low performance aircraft designed to carry not more than 2 persons which meets low momentum parameters that are acceptable to the Director*

The following specifications are considered as an acceptable means of compliance to meet the definition of a microlight aircraft:

- any of the microlight specifications called up in the type design standards listed in Appendix 1 of this AC, *Equivalent Design Standards*, or
- a one or two seat aircraft whose stall speed in the landing configuration at maximum gross weight does not exceed 45 knots and whose maximum gross weight does not exceed:
  - for a two-place landplane, 600 kg, or
  - for a two-place seaplane or amphibian, 650 kg, or
  - for a single place landplane, 510 kg, or
  - for a single place seaplane or amphibian, 550 kg.

**Note:** All microlight design standards require a microlight aircraft to be able to carry a realistic payload while remaining under the maximum weight limit. This is defined as two persons (typically specified as 88 kg) plus fuel for one hour endurance at normal cruise power setting. CAA will also apply this payload criteria to any other microlight aircraft which have not been certificated to a design standard. This effectively means that any microlight aircraft operating under Part 103 must have an empty weight around 405 kg or less.

## 2. Rule Compliance

**Note:** Only rules requiring guidance or acceptable data are addressed in this AC.

### Rule 103.5(a)(1) Pilot requirements

A microlight pilot certificate referred to in this rule is issued by a holder of an aviation recreation organisation certificate under Part 149 (a Part 149 organisation). While not specifically provided for in Part 103, the performance of a biennial flight review is required under the operating procedures of the Part 149 organisation from which the pilot certificate was issued. Pilots should be aware of the need to have a biennial flight review prior to acting as pilot in command.

Pilots holding foreign microlight pilot certificates may apply to a Part 149 organisation to have their experience assessed and if satisfactory, recognised and a New Zealand microlight pilot certificate issued.

**Note:** Microlight certificates are not recognised by ICAO and therefore cannot be used in foreign countries without an assessment to establish equivalence and, if assessed as equivalent, the issue of a microlight pilot certificate by that country.

**Rule 103.7(2)(ii) Flight instruction**

To be granted a microlight instructor certificate, an applicant needs to demonstrate competence in the piloting of a microlight aircraft to a microlight instructor. The purpose of the requirement to demonstrate competence to a microlight instructor is to ensure that the person holding an instructor rating under Part 61 is familiar with the unique handling characteristics of very low momentum aircraft.

### **3. Subpart E – Operating Rules**

**Rule 103.101 Registration**

The applicant for a certificate of registration must provide evidence that the aircraft meets the definition of a microlight as defined in Part 1. This may be met by showing evidence that the aircraft meets a type design standard listed in rule 103.207(a)(1)(ii). It is the applicant's responsibility to provide this information. Insufficient information will delay registration as the details of the model and certification basis have to be loaded into the CAA database to issue the registration certificate.

This is particularly important for a Class 1 microlight, where CAA does not have any other involvement with the aircraft after registration. CAA must have some definitive data to confirm eligibility. This may be provided from an authoritative source such as the manufacturer's published descriptive material or website. Another option would be evidence that the aircraft has been accepted as a microlight by another recognised national airworthiness authority (NAA) in the form of a certificate of registration.

**Rule 103.103 Aircraft flight manual (AFM)**

A person operating a microlight aircraft is not required to operate the aircraft in accordance with operating limitations specified in the AFM. This was appropriate for the low-performance simple microlights that were typical when the rule was originally written, and such aircraft did not come with an AFM.

Some microlights are now quite sophisticated aircraft, with retractable landing gear, relatively complex systems and quite high-performance functions. The manufacturer may produce a comprehensive AFM for the aircraft. CAA considers it appropriate that in those cases the pilot should use that document.

The Microlight Flight Permit contains as standard wording:

*This Aircraft shall be operated in accordance with any limitations specified by the manufacturer.*

Therefore, it is expected that a pilot will use and comply with the limitations found in the manufacturer's AFM and ensure all limitation placards and markings are installed.

**Rule 103.105(a) Documents to be carried**

A person operating a microlight aircraft is not required to carry the AFM. However, as per the advice in the section on rule 103.103, for more sophisticated aircraft, it is strongly recommended that the manual/document the manufacturer provides with the aircraft is carried on board and is available in flight.

**Rule 103.107 Placards**

The placards required here must be legible, that is:

- in contrasting colours, and
- easily readable by the pilot in the seated position.

The data for the design or certificated gross weight (whichever is the lesser) and the maximum and minimum payload must be extracted from the design specifications or AFM provided by the manufacturer. Where additional equipment is added after the weight and balance calculations carried out by the manufacturer, a new empty weight is to be established so the true payload can be determined. This payload is to be used to develop the placard required by rule 103.107(a)(2).

## 4. Subpart F – Flight Rules

### Rule 103.151 Fuel requirements

A pilot of a microlight aircraft is not required to operate with a 30-minute fuel reserve. While this was appropriate for the low-performance simple microlights that were in evidence when the rule was originally written, some types of modern microlight are capable of cross-country flight with a significant endurance. For that type of aircraft, it is recommended that the operator comply with the requirements of rule 91.305(a), *Fuel requirements for flight under VFR*.

### Rule 103.153 Minimum heights

While rule 91.311 prohibits operating an aircraft at a height of less than 500 feet under visual flight rules (VFR), this rule permits the operation of a microlight below 500 feet. Again, this was due to the low performance and mass of the early basic microlight. The more modern high-performance microlight can readily climb to normal circuit height. It is strongly recommended that an operator of a high-performance microlight should not operate below the minimum 500 feet.

### Rule 103.155 Flight criteria

For the purpose of rule 103.155(b)(2)(i), an equivalent examination means an examination conducted by a Part 149 organisation authorised to conduct the examination under the scope of their certificate.

### Rule 103.159 Carriage of passengers

A pilot is prohibited from carrying a passenger in a microlight aircraft unless the aircraft has a statement of airworthiness entered in the applicable maintenance record under rule 103.213. The maintenance record referred to in this rule is usually the aircraft airframe logbook. Therefore, the pilot must make sure to check that the statement of airworthiness is entered in the aircraft airframe logbook before carrying any passenger.

## 5. Subpart G – Airworthiness and Maintenance

### Rule 103.205 Application for flight permit

Note that by virtue of the definition of a Class 2 microlight aircraft in Part 1, a Class 1 helicopter would be included.

**Rule 103.207 Issue of flight permit**

This rule specifies the requirements for the issue of a microlight flight permit. An applicant is required to provide documented evidence relating to the:

1. Type design acceptance
2. Compliance with mandatory requirements, and
3. Assessment of individual aircraft condition.

Each aspect is described in more detail below:

**Rule 103.207(a)(1) Type design acceptance – acceptable means of compliance**

A Class 2 microlight must have had some kind of type design acceptance. The three ways that this can be achieved are:

1. If the microlight has been shown to meet a detailed airworthiness design standard of any one of the foreign civil aviation authorities (or NAAs) referred to in the rule. The issue of a microlight type certificate or equivalent document is sufficient evidence of a microlight conforming to a type design standard required by the rule. It could also be demonstrated by the issue of a microlight flight permit by a foreign civil aviation authority or NAA which was known to have such type design requirements. The rule also allows the Director to accept different design standards if they are evaluated and found to be equivalent to one of the standards specified in the rule. Newly-accepted design standards may be added to Appendix 1 of this AC in future revisions.
2. By providing evidence of a satisfactory airworthiness history of the aircraft type. This is the common method for microlights from countries which do not have any formal airworthiness certification requirements for microlights. (In the USA for example ultralights can only be single-seat, and larger microlight class aircraft operate in the experimental amateur-built category.) CAA would expect a formal statement on satisfactory flight experience from the aircraft manufacturer, although a less formal statement in the form of a news report from an authoritative source may be accepted.
3. If neither of the methods described in paragraphs (1) or (2) can be achieved, or in the case of a one-off design, the rule also provides for individual type acceptance by endurance test similar to that done for amateur-built aircraft. The flight test period would usually be a minimum period of 40 hours.

**Rule 103.207(a)(1)(ii)(D) Equivalent standards acceptable to the Director – acceptable means of compliance**

The Director can accept other design standards found to be equivalent to the design standards listed in paragraphs A, B and C of the rule. Appendix 1 of this AC contains standards considered acceptable to the Director. Other standards may be accepted following review after application to CAA.

**Rule 103.207(a)(2) Mandatory requirements**

The evidence required here will normally be assessed at the time of the aircraft inspection for the issue of the microlight flight permit. The applicant is to have available a set of completed New Zealand logbooks for the airframe, engine and propeller, which should include details of any previous service if the aircraft is imported second hand. (The original foreign logbooks should also be available to support this history.)

**Rule 103.207(a)(2)(iii)** requires a statement to be inserted into the logbooks showing that required inspections, replacement, overhauls and maintenance that are considered mandatory by the manufacturer of the aircraft, engine or components have been done. This information may be found in the service manual, AFM, service bulletins and service letters.

**Rule 103.207(a)(3) Individual aircraft condition assessment**

This rule refers to the inspection required prior to the issue of a microlight flight permit. At the present time only CAA can carry out this inspection. (Before this inspection, CAA will expect an annual inspection to have been carried out as per rule 103.217(c)(1)). If the inspection is satisfactory a statement will be inserted into the airframe logbook referencing this rule.

**Rule 103.207(b) Temporary flight permit**

This rule is used to allow a New Zealand-designed and manufactured microlight that does not meet any of the foregoing standards to be flown for the purpose of proving the design. For aircraft intended for series production the microlight must also be subject to the wing and undercarriage tests required in British Civil Airworthiness Requirements section "S". Copies of this document can be downloaded from the UK CAA website.

**Rule 103.207(c) Operating limitations for temporary flight permit**

The temporary flight permit will have limitations specified on it and will terminate on a specific date which will not exceed six months. The limitations may address:

- the specific area where the flights can take place
- the qualifications of the pilot eligible to conduct the test flights
- the configuration of the aircraft, and/ or
- the kinds of tests that can be conducted.

**Rule 103.209 Modification**

An operator who modifies a microlight that has a flight permit, where that modification may affect the airworthiness of the aircraft, must have the aircraft reassessed and reinspected to ensure it still fully complies with the requirements of rule 103.207.

Where a Part 149 organisation has a suitably qualified and experienced inspector and appropriate procedures, CAA may authorise that individual inspector to carry out this reassessment and reinspection process for continued compliance with rule 103.207. In such a case the inspector will be required to be nominated as a Senior Person in the Part 149 organisation.

The Part 149 Senior Person qualifications and experience to be issued an authorisation under rule 103.209 should include:

- at least five years of Microlight Inspector engineering experience covering all aspects of Part 103 construction, materials, techniques, standards, and procedures, and
- being a Licenced Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (LAME) with extensive experience in light general aviation aircraft, or
- other relevant design or engineering experience acceptable to the Director.

CAA may interview any proposed Senior Persons to determine their suitability for an authorisation.



The Part 149-appropriate procedures for reassessment and reinspection of a modification should include:

- assessing modification to determine if it affects airworthiness
- carrying out a technical assessment of the modification to ensure that the modified aircraft has a similar level of safety with respect to structural strength, performance, stability and handling, and weight and balance (which could be done either by reference to the original microlight design standard, if known, or by comparison with the original accepted configuration), and
- producing a document certifying that the aircraft with the modification embodied is still in compliance with rule 103.207.

When a document has been issued certifying that the design change has been reassessed and reinspected and is satisfactory to return to service, the microlight owner should make an entry in the aircraft logbook detailing the modification and attesting to the fact the aircraft still meets the requirements of rule 103.207, attaching a copy of the Part 149 document.

#### **Rule 103.211 Endurance Testing**

The following refers to aircraft specified in paragraphs (a) (1) to (4) of the rule:

- (1) an aircraft built from plans in cases where the builder has sourced the raw materials
- (2) an aircraft built from plans in cases where the raw materials are provided in a kit from a recognised supplier
- (3) kits consisting of pre-made parts with all materials supplied that are assembled using assembly instructions
- (4) aircraft with no construction required, just assembly of major components.

#### **Rule 103.213(1) Statement of airworthiness**

The pilot who completes the endurance testing must make a statement in the maintenance records, that is, the aircraft logbooks, including:

- a list of the manoeuvres completed (stalling, steep turns,  $V_{ne}$  dive and aerobatic manoeuvres etc.)
- the range of speeds at which the manoeuvres were performed
- weights at which the aircraft was flown, and
- the Centre of Gravity (C of G) limits at which the aircraft was operated.

To assist with recording these details, the Sport Aircraft Association NZ (SAANZ) has developed a test schedule which addresses all these points. SAANZ can be contacted via their website at:

<https://www.saa.org.nz/>

#### **Rule 103.217 Maintenance and inspection requirements**

This rule covers maintenance and inspection requirements in respect of Class 1 and Class 2 microlight aircraft.

Rule 103.217(a)(1) requires the operator to maintain the microlight in an airworthy condition. The Part 1 definition of “airworthy condition” is:

*the condition of an aircraft, including its components, fuel, and other materials and substances essential to the manufacture and operation of the aircraft, that complies with all the requirements prescribed by the Civil Aviation Rules relating to design, manufacture, maintenance, modification, repair, and safety.*

Rule 103.217(a)(2) requires the operator to ensure that every applicable airworthiness directive is complied with in accordance with Part 39. Incidentally, Part 103 uses the same wording as in Part 91; ‘applicable to certificated aircraft’. It has been common practice to only record the ‘microlight’ airworthiness directives (ADs) in the aircraft logbooks. However, many of the general ADs (not type-specific) are also applicable to microlight aircraft because of the equipment or components fitted.

Modern microlights are becoming very sophisticated in using glass cockpits, auto pilots, transponders, constant speed propellers and retracting landing gear, so the general ADs should be reviewed to ensure components fitted are not the subject of an AD. When the ADs are initially reviewed, they are also entered into the ADs section of the logbook. Then, when it comes time for the annual condition inspection (which will include a review of applicable ADs) the hard work will have been done with the initial assessment of the AD Series, and the inspector’s job will be quicker. However, once an AD Series is in the logbook, the logbook needs to be continually updated when new ADs in the Series are issued. This is done by consulting the CAA website or subscribing to the free CAA notification service. (AD logbook templates are available online, and CAA has added customised ones for the more common AD schedules, on the CAA website.)

Rule 103.217(a)(3) is clear. When a defect occurs during normal operations, the defect must be rectified. It cannot be deferred until the next inspection.

Rule 103.217(b) is also straightforward. Most modern microlights are provided with a manufacturer’s service or maintenance manual. These manuals will spell out the required inspection intervals and what is required to be done at each of the intervals. If the organisation’s aircraft was provided with such a document, then it must be complied with. Compliance with any manufacturer requirements applies both to the aircraft type, and also any major components fitted such as the engine and propeller.

**Note:** *Some Part 149 organisations have had an exemption granted and a procedure accepted under which an engine (and some engine components, where provided for by an on-condition programme) can be operated beyond the engine manufacturer specified overhaul period, subject to a defined process of engine condition monitoring.*

Rule 103.217 (c) is self-explanatory.

Rules 103.217 (d), (e) and (f) provide for the conducting and certifying of the annual condition inspection. Certification is required to be made on an inspection form. Current Part 149 organisations provide their respective inspectors with a pre-printed inspection sheet for recording the inspection, results and the certification, which should be inserted in the aircraft logbook when completed. A LAME with a current licence and appropriate aircraft and engine group ratings under Part 66 must produce their own inspection form. This form is to provide for the same level of detail as those provided by the Part 149 organisations.

The person who performs the annual condition inspection is required to permanently affix an inspection currency sticker to the aircraft close to the point of entry. The sticker must contain the:

- name and signature of inspector
- registration of aircraft, and
- date next annual condition inspection is due.

It should also include the name of the organisation that the inspector is authorised by (if applicable). Lastly, it should be of a material robust enough to ensure it remains readable until the next annual condition inspection.

#### **Rule 103.219 Construction**

A person is not required to comply with Part 148 (manufacturing organisations) if constructing a microlight aircraft from any of the material specified in the rule. However, when a person or organisation is assembling or manufacturing microlights to sell for pecuniary (financial) gain, then the person or organisation may seek Part 148 certification.

#### **Rule 103.221 Instruments and equipment requirements**

The reference to type design in paragraph (a)(1)(i) refers to one of the type designs specified in rule 103.207(a)(1)(ii) and which may identify instruments and equipment required to be installed in order to meet the particular type design.

Rule 103.221(a)(1)(ii) refers to additional instruments and equipment a designer or manufacturer may require over and above the type design requirements specified in the paragraph above.

Regarding rule 103.221(a)(2), notwithstanding the need to have a means of indicating airspeed, altitude and magnetic heading, if an engine manufacturer requires engine instrumentation, such as RPM, oil pressure and temperature, cylinder head temperature or coolant temperature and EGT, then these are to be installed. If the aircraft is a helicopter, then in addition a means of indicating rotor and engine RPM are to be installed.

## APPENDIX 1. Equivalent Design Standards

The following design standards are considered acceptable to the Director as equivalent microlight type design standards under rule 103.207(a)(1)(ii)(D).

Document title:	Issued by:
CS-LSA	European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)
ASTM LSA Standards	ASTM Committee F37
UL/2 PT2	Civil Aviation Authority of the Czech Republic
DS 10141E Issue 002	LAMAC and Transport Canada