

Require Judge Refresher Course be held on non-competition day

P&P 501.4.4 requires a judge refresher course for judges at National Championship contests. Setting aside the largely unnecessary aspect of a Judge Refresher Course – the course content in 2025 included new rules for 2025 for which judges would have already familiarized themselves via the recurrency exam, very basic 1-for-5 type discussion, and some glider specifics – the course was held on the same day as competition flights putting those pilots who also volunteered as judges at a safety and significant competitive disadvantage.

In the several years prior to 2025 this course has been held a week or two before the contest. Additionally, the online course has been recorded for subsequent viewing credit by judges not able to attend. Prior to years in which an online course was held, the refresher had been generally held the day prior to the first contest flights. In 2025 the course was scheduled and held early on the morning of the first contest flights, meaning that the few judges who were also competing in the category flying on the first day were expected to be up very early and not focused on their competition flights. Meanwhile those pilots not volunteering as judges were free to be well-rested and prepared for their competition flights. This puts those pilots who volunteer as judges at an unfair disadvantage, penalized for volunteering. Ultimately those pilot volunteers were allowed to view an earlier recorded refresher (from glider nationals), but only after threatening to remove themselves from judging, which would have removed some of the most experienced and qualified judges.

I recommend the Judge refresher not be held on a competition flying day and every attempt should be made to hold the course electronically several days before contest practice days. The only way to ensure this occurs is to modify the P&P's.

P&P 501 proposal from Craig Gifford regarding Judge Refresher Course at Nationals

Proposed P&P change:

Change 501.4.4 From:

501.4.4. The Contest Director will schedule a Judge Refresher Course covering the IAC Official Contest Rules, judging criteria, and specific procedures related to judging at the Championships. The IAC Judges Program Chair or their designee will conduct this Judge Refresher Course no earlier than two weeks prior to the start of the Championship. All judges who will be judging the Championship will be required to attend or make special arrangements with, and at the discretion of, the Judges Program Chair.

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