

FAQ

Sonoran Desert Flyers, Inc.

AMA Charter Field #3249

What is Sonoran Desert Flyers? Sonoran Desert Flyers, Inc. (SDF) is an all electric (no glow or gas powered aircraft allowed) radio control model airplane club located at Naranja Park, Oro Valley, Arizona (660 W. Naranja Dr., Oro Valley, AZ, directions available on the club website at www.sonorandesertflyers.us).

What type of models are flown at SDF? All types of battery-powered, electric motor driven aircraft models are flown including: sport, scale, pattern, 3D, gliders, and helicopters as long as they are 25 lbs. or less (2 lb. limit for park flyer membership, see membership guide) and conform to SDF and Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) safety codes.

Is there an age limit for flying R/C model aircraft? There is no age limit but there are different membership plans available depending on the members age.

How can I get more information about the club? You may join us at the field on any flying day and get all the information you need about the club or you may call Jim Hilgefurd at 488-7085 or e-mail Phil June at pjjune@pjjune.net for more information. You may also visit the club website at www.sonorandesertflyers.us.

How do I join the club and how much does it cost? There are several types of club membership offered. See the attached membership guide for details. You will need a membership in the SDF club as well as a membership in the AMA. Membership forms are available at the flying field from any officer; AMA membership forms are also available online at www.modelaircraft.org.

When is the SDF field open and what are the flying hours? The field is gated but all members are given the gate lock combination on membership approval. The field is technically open from 6 a.m. until sundown seven days a week. However, morning hours work out best due to higher sun position and increasing winds later in the day. That does not mean that there are fliers there at all times; we have regular meets on the weekends, and you will usually find folks at the field on Tuesdays and Thursdays also. Field rules require that no one flies alone, and if there is no designated safety officer or field marshal present then club members must responsibly act as the field safety officer.

Can I show up and watch? Absolutely! In fact we highly recommend it. Our members will be very happy to show you around and answer any questions you might have.

What are dues used for? As in any organization, dues are used to cover expenses incurred with the normal operation of the club and any special events sponsored by the club.

How hard is it to learn to fly R/C airplanes? As with any skill, it takes practice. The club has experienced flight instructors on hand to assist in your training. You can train on the club trainers or you own trainer-qualified airplane (must be appropriate trainer type with a buddy-box capable transmitter). The club recommends the E-Flite Apprentice, the Park Zone T-28 or the Hobby Zone Super Cub, or any similar type aircraft for training. The club buddy-box is a Spektrum radio so we highly recommend that you acquire a Spektrum or JR radio with your aircraft. There are

several good radio systems available (Spektrum, HiTec, Futaba, Airtronics, etc.), but different brands are not compatible with each other for buddy box training.

Helicopters look interesting; are they hard to fly and can I start out with one? Helicopters can definitely be fun, but they are maintenance-intensive just like the real things. If you have a “ground incident” you can expect to spend a fair amount of time and money to repair your heli. We highly recommend that you get in a lot of simulator time before actually attempting to fly a model helicopter. Learning to fly fixed wing aircraft is definitely an easier and less costly path to success.

Are flight simulators useful? There are two types of flight simulators: true perspective flight simulators (e.g., Microsoft Flight Simulator, Pro Flight, X-Plane) and R/C flight simulators (e.g., RealFlight, AeroFly for Macs). Both are helpful but the R/C flight sims are specifically directed towards learning to fly radio control models and are therefore more appropriate. A good R/C flight simulator is a must for learning to fly helicopters.

How high, how far and how fast can model aircraft fly? The AMA and FAA advisory limits altitude to 400 feet AGL. Our agreement with the town and La Cholla Airpark limits our altitude to 200 feet AGL. We occasionally see aircraft coming from or going to La Cholla Airpark at very low altitudes; we are always on the lookout for these aircraft and must give way to them at all times. The radio systems we use typically have ranges in excess of a mile, far beyond visual range. Generally speaking we fly in a 500’ by 300’ box in front of the runway. Depending on the aircraft design and intent our models can fly anywhere from about 10 mph to speeds well in excess of 100 mph.

How long are typical flights? Depending on the aircraft and the power system you can expect flight times of 4 minutes to 15 minutes or more. Gliders can fly for very long times in “thermal” mode with the motors off

How much does it cost to get started? The initial cost can vary depending on what path you take. The typical ARF trainer package with radio will cost between \$200 and \$400.

Can I buy used equipment to save money? Used equipment CAN be a good way to get started with the caveat that you must be sure that the equipment you are buying is not damaged and can be operated safely

When can I fly my plane on my own? Every new member must perform a solo checklist, executed by one of the designated club flight instructors. Until a member is solo certified you must fly on a “buddy-box” with a club instructor.

Are there club meetings? The board meets whenever pressing club business needs to be addressed. Generally speaking we try to avoid scheduling general membership meetings, preferring to conduct elections and other business via our club e-mail list. This is easier and less problematic than trying to get all members together at one time and place. This also guarantees a higher participation rate from the club membership in matters of concern.

What should I know about safety? Model aviation is an enjoyable hobby for friends and families. There are however, risks and significant dangers that do exist and must be addressed. SDF has a designated Safety Officer and several Field Marshals who ensure that field and AMA safety rules are being followed at all times.

Are there club bylaws? Yes. As an Arizona non-profit corporation, and as an AMA chartered field, club bylaws are required. Copies are available from the club secretary at the field or by e-mail request.

Last updated 10.16.2012

Membership Requirements and Dues

Sonoran Desert Flyers, Inc.

AMA Charter Field #3249

Flying at the Sonoran Desert Flyers field requires memberships in both the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) and the Sonoran Desert Flyers. There are several levels of membership depending on age of member and type of membership desired.

Full Membership (Adult)- AMA dues \$58 (Ages 19-64) or \$48 (65 and over), \$ / SDF dues \$20 / Term one year

Grants full membership and voting privileges including \$2.5 million AMA liability insurance, medical, fire, theft and vandalism coverage and Model Aviation magazine

Full Membership (Youth, Under Age 19)- AMA dues \$1 or \$15 with magazine / SDF Dues \$1 / Term one year

Grants full membership and voting privileges including \$2.5 million AMA liability insurance, medical, fire, theft and vandalism coverage and Model Aviation magazine (optional)

Park Pilot Membership (Adult)- AMA dues \$29.95 / SDF dues \$20 / Term one year

Grants full membership and voting privileges including \$500,000 AMA liability insurance and Park Pilot magazine; limited to models that weigh less than 2 lbs. and do not exceed 60 mph.

Introductory 90 Day Membership (Adult)- AMA dues \$19.95 / SDF dues \$10 / Term 90 days

Grants full membership and voting privileges including AMA liability insurance and Model Aviation magazine; *Fees are transferable to full membership within the ninety day program.*

Sponsored Guest (All Ages)- Must be valid AMA member / SDF dues WAIVED / Term one day

Guest must be sponsored by current SDF member; grants one day flying privileges at SDF field; can be used one time only; this membership is intended for sponsored guests of SDF members who wish to join us for an introductory day of flying

Walk-In Guest (All Ages)- Must be valid AMA member / SDF dues \$5 / Term one day

Grants one day flying privileges at SDF field; this membership is primarily intended for out of town pilots or members of other local flying fields who wish to join us for a day of flying