

Taking to the Skies this Summer

Winter's over and with longer evenings and better weather, we know you're just hankering to take to the skies again. But before you do, here are some reminders to ensure you're fit-to-fly this summer.

Weather Complacency

Summer doesn't just mean clear skies. The weather in New Zealand is always changeable and there can be strong and gusty winds, more pronounced sea breezes, aggressive thermals, and towering cumulus formations throughout summer – all with associated turbulence.

Always do a weather check as part of your flight planning. Use MetFlight GA, <http://metflight.metra.co.nz>, and include the ARFORs, TAFs, and METARs in your considerations. Combine these with your observations of actual conditions to form the 'big picture'. For more information, refer to the *VFR Met GAP* booklet available on the CAA web site, www.caa.govt.nz, or email: info@caa.govt.nz for a printed copy.

Charts Up-to-date

Are your charts up-to-date? New visual navigation charts effective 13 November 2014 can now be ordered from www.aipshop.co.nz.

Aeronautical Information Publication subscriptions for Vols 1-4, can also be purchased in hardcopy from www.aipshop.co.nz, or you can download them free at www.aip.net.nz.

Increased Traffic

With more aircraft in the sky over summer, you need to be aware of the increased traffic around you. And remember, while a GPS may get you from point A to B directly, it may not be the best, most scenic, or fun route to take. Also be aware that there may be others on the same GPS track as you. Check out the back page of this issue of *Vector* for some of summer's hotspots this season.

Daylight Saving

Another often overlooked aspect of summer flying is time. Summer means long evenings, and part of that is due to New Zealand switching to Daylight time in September until April. This means that during summer our time is 13 hours ahead of UTC rather than 12. Make sure you factor this in when making any flight plans, interpreting weather reports, and providing ETA or SAR times.

Carburettor Icing

Carburettor icing doesn't just happen in cold weather. In fact, humid summer days are more of a risk than cold, clear winter days as cold air holds less moisture than warm air. Carburettor icing should be expected when the outside air temperature is between -10°C and $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ with high humidity and visible moisture present, but is most likely between $+10^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $+15^{\circ}\text{C}$, with a relative humidity above 40 per cent.

You must use your knowledge and experience to identify carburettor icing – the closer the temperature and dewpoint readings, the greater the relative humidity.

Grass Aerodromes

Landing on grass can be a bit of a challenge even in summer. Just because it's a beautiful day doesn't mean that the ground is as dry as you think it is and you may need more space than you think. You should also be aware that the length of the grass and how wet it is can affect the distance needed for both takeoff and landings.

Summer is synonymous with fly-ins in the aviation community. This was at the Sport Aircraft Association national fly-in at Hastings Aerodrome in March 2014.

Your Airworthiness

It's not just the 'plane that needs to be airworthy, but the pilot too!

If it's been a while since you last flew, perhaps take a ride with an instructor as a refresher?

Check out our online *Personal Preflight* course at www.caa.govt.nz/avkiwi. It's got lots of information to help you check out your fitness to fly.

Your Health

Are you stressed or fatigued? Your mental health is just as important as your physical health if you're heading into the skies. Also, make sure you're not impaired by alcohol or drugs, including prescription medicine.

You must report all medical conditions with any short or medium-term effect, as well as any changes in existing conditions. Under the Civil Aviation Act and rules, a pilot who experiences a known medical deficiency, an increase in a known medical deficiency, or a medically significant condition, must not return to flight duty until examined and certified by a designated medical examiner.

Dehydration

By the time you realise you're thirsty, you're well on your way to dehydration and its affects may have already started – from just being hot and sweating profusely, right through to a decline in peripheral vision and logical thinking.

All pilots need to be aware that dehydration impairs performance.

The best way to keep hydrated is to eat and drink regularly, and avoid diuretics like alcohol and caffeine. Drink around two litres of water every 24 hours, and ensure you've had a couple of glasses of water before you head off into the skies. On warm or hot days, it's especially important to be adequately hydrated, as you may quickly become dehydrated in a hot cabin environment.

Bird Nests

Spring sees the hatching of birds, so you should always check for bird nests under the engine cowls or in the fuselage. While the chicks may be cute, the nests pose a very real danger to flight safety. Depending on where they are, they could cause an engine to overheat, catch fire, or seize. Nests built in the fuselage or wing can foul the control cables and could result in a control surface jamming.

Thoroughly checking for bird nests during the pre-flight is essential, especially during spring and summer.

And Finally...

Are your medical certificate and your Biennial Flight Review current? If not, make sure you allow plenty of time to get up-to-date as this time of year is busy for everyone.

If applying for a licence, the same applies. Make sure your paperwork is complete, and get your application in with plenty of time before the holidays.

Happy flying! ■

