

January '09 Safety Newsletter

Dear fellow pilots,

I would like to start with an introduction and an update. John Li and myself (Bob Tandy) will be taking over as Acting CFI's for the next three months. During this period one of our tasks will be to prepare for an ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) audit of our flying operations. This audit will involve an inspection of our operations by representatives from CAD and ICAO and will take place between February 26th and March 3rd.

Before the audit we will be reviewing the way we conduct our business and introducing improvements to our operations. Central to this will be the introduction of a robust Safety Management System (SMS) with the aim to improve the safety awareness and safety standards of all club pilots and staff as much as is possible. Some of you may recall the excellent talk given in the past by club member, Captain John Bent, on this very topic.

One essential part of a good SMS is to have a fair and open method of handling incidents, which occur in our flying activities. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that incidents are going to occur. Nobody is perfect, no aircraft or equipment is perfect. What we must do is have a "fair and just culture" for the handling of these incidents such that we are not afraid to report. Indeed, we want members to feel they can share their experiences with other club members so everybody can learn. Individually, we do not have enough time to make all the mistakes ourselves. To make it clear, here it is...!

Any member who makes a mistake and is involved in an incident will not be penalized.

This "just culture" is normal in the airline business and most other flying clubs. We want it to be part of the Hong Kong Aviation Club too.

There will be an amendment to the Flying Orders soon with the introduction of the HKAC Safety Management System. In the meantime, please read on since we are now getting to the interesting bits

We are going to very briefly review some incidents, without names and without blame, and extract the learning points. Again to re-emphasise, the aim here is to improve everyone's safety awareness and reduce the possibility of repeat occurrences. So here goes.

Fuel cap lost from Cessna and subsequently found in the runway 11 undershoot.

During your pre-flight, check to ensure the fuel cap chain is not broken or missing. If it is, report it. Remember to check the cap is replaced after tank inspection. Instructors should not rely on the student for this check. The helicopter does not have a chain on the cap so what I do is to put the fuel cap on the pilots seat. That way, if I forget to replace it I should soon notice when I try and sit down! A simple strategy, but it works.

Complaints from ATC that HKAC aircraft are not squawking ALT when using the transponder.

This has led to nuisance TCAS warnings in commercial aircraft cockpits while flying the approach to CLK. We must ensure that we squawk ALT when using the transponder, by selecting the rotary switch through the ON to the ALT position.

WAGLAN

Remember that WAG is now controlled airspace. Hence, if you wish to enter from PSH you must request an entry clearance from HK Information BEFORE entering. If you cannot get the clearance because the R/T is busy, stay in PSH until you can.

Loss of communications in sectors

If you experience radio failure while flying in sectors and you cannot find the problem DON'T PANIC. The aircraft is still perfectly airworthy and its one less thing to worry about! Just squawk 7600 and fly back to Shek Kong and land without delay. Fly the published joining procedure, make all the standard R/T calls (in case the transmitter is still working) and keep an extremely good lookout.

If you are not sure how the radio panel works or how to troubleshoot a radio failure please ask any of our Instructors. Unfortunately, the radio panels in our aircraft are all different and we need to know how they all work.

Near misses (or AIRPROX). We have had a spate of near misses in the recent past.

One of the best ways to avoid these is to keep a good LOOKOUT and LISTEN OUT. Maintain a good mental picture of the other aircraft flying in your area.

Consider flying at an odd altitude. Have you noticed that everybody flies at 2000ft? Why not be different and fly at 1800ft or 2300ft?

When entering a new UCARA include your altitude with your report to alert other aircraft. This is a requirement from the AIP but a lot of people do not do this!

Keep the taxi light on for conspicuity. On hazy days this is very effective.

If ATC warns you of another aircraft in your vicinity it is because you are on a collision course with that aircraft. If you cannot immediately see the other aircraft change your course. If you know the other aircraft is at the same altitude change it, but tell ATC in case the other aircraft is doing the same thing!

If you see the other aircraft stay at least 500ft vertically or horizontally away from it.

Lookout is a discipline that is only really learnt when you have your first AIRPROX. Delay that first AIRPROX as long as possible!

The Northern flying boundary in TOLO and MBY

Most of this boundary is over the ocean and there is no black line on the ocean to show where it is. Hence it is very difficult to assess exactly where the boundary lies. Although no violations have been filed by ATC a recent warning to a club aircraft shows that we need to give this boundary a wider berth.

Please study the proper flying chart, review where this boundary is and reference it to ground features such as PING CHAU and the islands in northern TOLO.

SB canopy opened when the power was increased. Radius arms were damaged.

The canopy is like an aerofoil section and it will try and open when the airflow over it is increased. It is essential the canopy be securely locked before power is increased above 1500RPM.

Ensure you know how the canopy locking mechanism works. When locking the canopy observe the two claws do wrap around the bar in the locking mechanism. Test push the canopy where it says PUSH HERE TO OPEN to ensure it is locked. Ensure the locking lever is above the horizontal indicator line.

The “canopy locked” is a critical check for SB. If you are not sure about the mechanism or how to check “canopy locked” please get guidance from an Instructor.

Cessna damaged after brake failure.

HN was back tracking and approaching the runway 11 undershoot when it suffered a right brake failure and collided with the concrete curb of the W area taxi way. How can we minimise the chance of this happening again? Consider the following.

Carry out a good brake check within the first few feet of moving. Also check the brakes with full left and full right rudder. Instructors remember to check your brakes as well as the students. If the pressure is not even or one pedal is lower than the other, stop and get it fixed.

When back tracking follow the runway centre line, for two reasons. Firstly it makes you easier to spot for aircraft in the air and secondly, it gives you space either side of the aircraft in case of an asymmetric brake failure with the resulting swing.

Slow down in good time when approaching the runway 11 undershoot. At least 100 m before the W taxi way. Test the brakes early. Stay on the centre line until you are back at a walking pace. These strategies will give you valuable TIME to deal with a brake failure.

Know the brake failure drill. The first action is to stop the engine as quickly as possible by switching the MAGS to OFF. This action will both help the aircraft to slow down and avoid engine damage due to sudden stoppage in the event of a prop strike.

The taxi way to W area has a concrete curb, which was installed by the HKAC in 2000 when we first gained access to W hangar. These curbs are not in compliance with ICAO requirements for a runway strip and they present an obstacle. We need to see if we can get them removed.

Beware of the other obstacles in C apron. There are several large black metal covers that will cause damage to aircraft if hit. Know where they are and stick as far as possible to the white taxi lines. These covers belong to the PLA and are probably a permanent feature. We must learn to live with them!

That's all for now. We have many more messages to pass on to you but to avoid the risk of boring you to sleep we shall save them until later!

If anyone has any comments, concerns or observations please pass them onto John Li or myself. The door (or inbox) is always open.

Happy and safe flying!

Bob