

General Aviation FEEDBACK



Edition 85 - August 2020

Editorial

As I write this editorial at the end of July, GA flying is hopefully about to come back to life as COVID-19 social-distancing restrictions continue to ease. But there's been much upheaval for many individuals, clubs and organisations, and the prospect of returning to flying in a very different environment where social distancing, use of face masks and significantly changed procedures will predominate means that the risk from distraction and anxiety is self-evident. In helping cope with all this, we operate in a world where procedures and checklists underpin all we do as the last 2 lines of defence in maintaining safety, and the handling of the return to flying should be no exception. The CAA, LAA and others have produced a number of materials that provide a useful handrail and food for thought about the various aspects of aviation in the post-COVID-19 world, and these are all well worth a read – there are many prompts within that will likely trigger a number of changes to how you approach your flying in the next few months. I can't list all the documents here, but see the following links for some great thoughts and advice: [DfT COVID-19 GA Guidance](#), [SN-2020/0011](#), [CAP1919 \(Advice & Tips for GA Pilots\)](#), [CAP1925 \(Preparing to Return to Flying for GA Pilots\)](#), [CAP1924 \(Flying Clubs & Schools\)](#) – search for 'COVID' in the [CAA publications search site](#) for more. The LAA's advice on [return to flying engineering issues](#) is worth a read, and GASCo have also produced a very accessible video titled [Returning to flying](#) that is well worth a watch.

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Also, don't forget your own mental wellbeing – you need to think about how safe you are to fly as well! Depending on the version you use, the 'S' and 'E' in the IMSAFE¹ mnemonic are a useful starting point, but how do you assess that yourself? Although primarily focused on commercial airline operations, the not-for-profit International Flight Safety Foundation (of which the independent UK Flight Safety Committee is part), have produced '[An Aviation Professional's Guide to Wellbeing](#)', which is well worth amateur aviators also having a look through to reflect on their personal stresses and read some thoughts on how to help cope.

Reporting timescales mean that the reports in this edition were mostly submitted pre-COVID-19 and so relate to very different circumstances. Even so, there are still many relevant lessons and topics of interest within. One aspect that chimes with taking care of yourselves and others was evident in the 2 reports about passenger flying. When briefing passengers on what to expect, and especially in group situations, pilots should also consider that some potential passengers might be victims of peer-pressure to fly and might be hiding their lack of enthusiasm or even fear about a flight in a light-aircraft. The CAA's [Safety Sense Leaflet No 2](#) gives good advice about what to consider when taking passengers new to flying, especially their medical and mental conditions.

The key message from me in the context of the post-COVID-19 era is that the months ahead will be difficult, and it is very human to be distracted by associated pressures, stresses and life-changing events. As we enter into this 'new normal', the need for empathy, encouragement and a watchful eye on others has also never been greater in order to ensure that their mistakes or distractions are picked up early so that they can be either prevented or corrected in a timely manner. Looking out for your mates and those involved in flying has always been a part of our world, but a sympathetic and timely word may just save the day in what can sometimes be a very individual hobby where oversight can often be minimal.

Stay safe!

Steve Forward, Director Aviation

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Comments on Previous FEEDBACKs

Comment No 1 – Naming of VRPs

Comment: With reference to Report No 2 in Edition 84: the naming of the VRP in this location [Holmes Chapel] needs looking at. It is inviting error to name a VRP on the edge of CAS with the name of a town some 1.2nm away inside CAS. 'Design' plays a huge role in accidents, whether in aviation or elsewhere, and every opportunity must be taken to consider changing designs that cause problems – particularly something so easy as instigating the renaming of a VRP.

CHIRP Response: In response to this comment, CHIRP contacted the CAA Airspace Infringements Team regarding a name change for the VRP and they were very responsive. They replied as follows:

"The Northwest Local Airspace Infringement Team (LAIT) met last week and agreed with the comments raised regarding the VRP at Holmes Chapel. The LAIT agreed with the CHIRP input and a discussion resulted in a proposal to remove that location as a VRP and replace it instead with Sandbach Services; the ANSP responsible will now submit an Airspace Change Proposal which is supported by all LAIT members. More to follow via official means as the process progresses."

It's always pleasing to see a positive outcome to our work, thank you to the reader for taking the time to write to us with their suggestion. For all those flying near the Manchester CTR, watch out for a VRP name and location change from Holmes Chapel to Sandbach Services in the near future!

¹ IMSAFE – Illness; Medication; Stress; Alcohol; Fatigue; Emotion/Eating

Comment No 2 – Photo-ID for passengers and pilots

Comment: I'm writing concerning the issue of photo-ID for passengers and pilots in Edition 84, and the suggestion that passengers should carry a "valid" driving licence or passport. Having met similar issues in another sphere with an elderly parent needing ID but no longer travelling or driving, I believe the need for "valid" should be challenged. The "validity" should only be required to exercise the privileges granted by the document in question for a photo document. If the other details and the holder's appearance are not significantly changed then what is the issue that requires it to be "valid" in order to be available as a demonstration of identity? Further, some passengers who may not have passports may also have had their driving licence privileges withdrawn on medical grounds and thus be unable to provide documentation. In my parents' case I was unwilling to suggest that they spend £80 on a passport that they would not use.

CHIRP Response: The comments above about ID will probably chime with many who get to an age where documents go out of validity and who may not want to renew them. CHIRP has sympathy, but there are probably a number of reasons why agencies would need to see in-date, valid versions, particularly if there's an issue with an out-of-date ID where the likeness in the photo may not reflect the person presenting the ID if it was issued many years ago. Also, in the situation represented in the report we published, the security operative will probably have had to ensure that the person was legally entitled to be in the UK and, if the ID was out of date then there was potentially a situation where a replacement might have been denied and they were simply using the old ID because they weren't entitled to have a new one. But the whole issue begs the question "what do people use for photographic ID if they don't have a passport or driving licence?" A quick search on the internet revealed things called '[Citizen Card](#)' and also '[myIDCard](#)' (other cards are probably available). Both these seem to have official endorsement and cost only £15. CHIRP understands that it's also permissible to show a photo-rail/bus pass, birth certificate or national insurance card in such circumstances provided that for the last 2 they are accompanied by a passport-sized photo that has been countersigned on the back by someone who can confirm identity.

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Reports

Report No.1 – Stressful experience

Report Text: I recently took a passenger for a 20-minute experience flight in a Chipmunk. In the pre-flight brief, I chatted to the passenger and established that her neighbour, who was there with her, had bought the flight for her on impulse, and she was very excited about the prospect and looking forward to it. I established that she had not been up in a small aircraft before but had been flying on normal larger commercial flights. We discussed that we would be going for a short local flight, that the weather was lovely today, and that the visibility was amazing. At this point I had no reason for concern regarding her mental or emotional state, she behaved similarly to many ordinary passengers who are keen and excited about the flight they are going on.

The passenger remained rational but excited during pre-flight checks and taxi. On the departure she was talking to herself a fair bit and, once we lifted off, she became stressed and started making loud gasps of surprise and shock. Flying from the front of the Chipmunk restricts you from seeing the passenger, there is no rear-view mirror, and turning around to view the passenger is near impossible, particularly in critical stages of flight. So, all I had was the sound of her voice. Looking at the video now, it is clear to see the changes in her composure, as soon as we lift off, she becomes markedly more tense, holding on to the coaming tightly, talking to herself, and becoming very concerned at the slightest wiggle of the aircraft.

My concern was that she would do something irrational with the controls, from my position I had no way of restraining her or getting into any physical contact, the only course was to keep talking calmly and keep the flight as level and steady as possible. As the flight continued, her voice progressively became more agitated and panicky, then stating that she was getting tingly feelings in her fingers, which I realised was due to her hyperventilating; this gave me more concern as I have experienced a car passenger with the same, progressing to a severe panic attack at which point they opened the door and bailed out. I now had a much clearer understanding of her state (bearing in mind I still could

not see her). I asked her to either hold on to the coaming, or to hold onto her shoulder straps, because I wanted to keep her hands away from the controls. I told her we would make an immediate return to the airfield and would make a faster approach than normal to get her down quickly. I also asked her to stop shouting because I could not understand what she was saying, but really I was trying to get her to calm down, hoping that by talking normally it would reduce her stress. The video shows the passenger kept her eyes closed for most of the circuit and landing, only opening them once we were on the ground.

With the benefit of hindsight, and watching the video, I should perhaps have ended the flight sooner. However, all I had to go on was a voice, which was excitable and nervous, something that is not uncommon with some passengers, as we all express ourselves in different ways. Most of the time this nervousness disappears as they start to relax and enjoy the flight experience. If I had the benefit of sitting next to her, as in a PA28, or the benefit of a mirror or some other means to assess her demeanour perhaps, I may well have returned to base sooner, but under the circumstances I feel that my actions and handling of the situation was the best that could be done.

Lessons Learned - Whilst it is impossible to assess all passengers to the level where you can guarantee safety and avoid emotional and/or physical ailment, this event serves to remind us of the value of these pre-flight interrogations. So, we now review the pre-flight brief to include salient questions such as medication and stress/anxiety recency.

CHIRP Comment: An aircraft with tandem seating is not ideal for a first passenger flight for the very reasons mentioned by the reporter, also, the Chipmunk has a distinctly strong 'aviation' smell that can be off-putting to those who are not accustomed. Flying with the passenger in the front where they could be observed by the pilot was not an option in this instance but fitting a rear-view mirror in the front cockpit could have assisted in monitoring the passenger in the rear. Although it appeared that the pilot had done all that he might reasonably have done to brief the passenger beforehand and to resolve the situation in the air, this report provided a useful reminder to all that those taking passengers flying should always make it absolutely clear that the passenger can terminate the flight at any point by simply and firmly requesting that the pilot lands as soon as possible; this is especially important in tandem-seat aircraft.

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Report No.2 – First Aid carried out by PIC

Report Text: We were on the return flight back to [airfield] when my passenger reported feeling unwell. I acknowledged and asked what his symptoms were whilst I rescanned the instruments and ensured the aircraft was stable. When I commenced one last look from left to right looking for any traffic, my passenger's head dropped forward. Being familiar with the airspace we were in, I elected to scan all the instruments again and, in doing so, saw the cabin heat was fully out. I immediately pushed the lever back in and opened the cold air vent to the side of the passenger. I noticed my passenger was wearing quite a few layers of clothes and had put a scarf on. I took the scarf off him, loosened his body warmer, turned the volume up on the headset and started talking to him. I then started gently slapping his face and he came around. I would estimate he was unconscious for approx. 20 seconds.

The cabin temperature was a lot cooler by now. I got him orientated quite quickly to where he was and what we were doing which he was fully coherent of and confirmed back to me. I offered him a bottle of water which he placed in the pocket by the door and gave him the checklist to focus on whilst I got us in position for arrival into [airfield]. I asked him how he was feeling, to which he confirmed he was feeling much better. I decided to continue with the standard joining procedure for [airfield] and make the rest of the flight using gentle turns whilst explaining a bit more what the next turn was going to be and how long to landing. By the time we got to the circuit he was absolutely fine, drinking a bit of water, fully coherent and going through the pre landing checklist happily. Once we landed, I checked again he was ok and he helped put the aircraft covers back on.

My passenger had no previous medical issues and he felt that he may have briefly got too hot by keeping his body warmer and scarf on whilst flying especially with the cabin heat fully out. Both these items of clothing were not worn on the first leg from [airfield], which was uneventful. I spoke with the passenger on the telephone in the evening to see how he was feeling, to which he confirmed he was

fine and was happy no further medical treatment was required. He commented that he had really enjoyed the day.

Lessons Learned - This occurrence really highlighted to me the importance of remembering the steps to take in the event of a potential issue or unwell passenger. Aviate, Navigate and Communicate. Having completed the first two tasks, it enabled me to focus on the passenger's wellbeing and carry out a quick first aid assessment, should I then need to communicate with a priority call to ATC requiring medical assistance, I had some initial medical information to pass if requested. It was also important to reassure the passenger about what our ETA back to the airfield was and running through the checklist in preparation for landing.

CHIRP Comment: The reporter had handled the situation very well. In addition to the steps he had taken to ensure the passenger was well, he could also have considered the possibility of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning if anyone on board appeared to be unconscious because that might also have been a factor that might have affected him. Carbon monoxide, formed by the incomplete combustion of carbon-containing materials, is a colourless, odourless gas that can cause damage to the brain, heart and nervous system. The symptoms of exposure can include; headache, fatigue, sleepiness, breathlessness, and degradation in performance. Continued exposure to elevated concentrations can cause unconsciousness and death. Recent CAA advice in [SN-2020/003](#) about CO sources and CO detectors provides useful information and all pilots should consider their installation, and the CAA have also recently published [CAP1881](#), an 'In Focus Special' titled 'Are You Breathing Easily?' on the potential risk of carbon monoxide poisoning in flying.

Finally, although the reporter does not mention what was briefed pre-flight in detail, this report is another useful reminder that any pilot taking a passenger should fully brief them on what to expect and what to wear; this is especially relevant if it's their first flight. Enquiring about the passenger's health, ability to clear their ears and medication is also important.

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Report No.3 – Paramotor fuel tank penetrated by propeller.

Report Text: I was on a Club Pilot Certificate training course and this was my third ever take-off with a paramotor (although I had already completed the Elementary Pilot Certificate flying a paraglider without a motor). I started my take-off run normally and the wing had started to develop lift. Feeling the harness go light, I lifted my feet off the ground, but I had not developed enough airspeed to lift me and the paramotor away from the ground. The paramotor fell and made a glancing contact with the ground. I carried on running and developed enough airspeed to take-off successfully. I climbed no more than two feet off the ground and my instructor (via the radio) told me to stop. I immediately stopped the engine and landed ahead within the boundary of the flying field. In the initial impact, the carbon fibre propeller had penetrated the bottom corner of the fuel tank, causing a gash about 200mm in length. This led to the immediate loss of a significant quantity of fuel although there was sufficient fuel remaining in the system to allow me to start to climb. Had it not been for the radio message from my instructor I would have continued to climb until the engine stopped and would likely have had to make a difficult emergency landing outside the flying field.

Lessons Learned:

1. The fuel tank is a thin-walled polypropylene moulding. The front corners of the tank are not protected from impact in any way and a minor glancing blow with the ground, which was not of sufficient magnitude to stop my take-off run, was sufficient to distort the tank in such a way that it was able to reach the propeller. In a machine used for training *ab initio* pilots this type of occurrence cannot be uncommon and the tank design could be better protected.
2. I lifted my feet too early in my take-off run. Having watched videos of my paraglider Elementary Pilot Certificate training flights, I seem to have had this habit from my first flights onwards. My instructor had sought to correct this tendency, and, after further instruction, I made a subsequent successful take-off in which I carried on running until sufficient airspeed had been developed. Perhaps *ab initio* training should be conducted on trikes or paramotors with some form of 'training wheels' to prevent inexperienced students from sitting down too early.

3. There was no firefighting equipment at the flying site. The BHPA should encourage registered schools to provide adequate firefighting equipment when training is in progress and paramotor pilots should ensure that they have their own firefighting equipment available at their flying sites.

4. Foot launched aero sports need to develop a culture in which incidents of this type are investigated properly and used to improve the safety of the sport. The BHPA should encourage the reporting and investigation of incidents for the purposes of safety improvement.

The reporter subsequently submitted a report to the BHPA who responded to CHIRP as follows.

BHPA Comments: The report appears to have come from a relatively new pilot who may not be wholly conversant with the well-established procedures the BHPA has in place for reporting and dealing with accidents, incidents and fatalities. The BHPA belongs to the European Hang Gliding & Paragliding Union (EHPU), where an online reporting system is commonly used by all member countries. This standardisation and commonality of incident reporting has allowed all European paragliding, hang gliding & paramotoring incidents to be compared thereby allowing for trends of flying/training incidents and equipment failures to be identified and promulgated. A link to the EHPU's online Incident Reporting Scheme Form is at: <https://ehpu-safetynetwork.org/plugins/form/235/en>, and a link to the BHPA's safety reporting scheme is halfway down the right-hand side of the BHPA website at <https://www.bhpa.co.uk/>.

With regard to the specific points raised:

- Fire-fighting equipment is recommended for use when undertaking paramotor training by all BHPA schools and the instructor should ensure that the student knows its location and how to use it. Fire precautions and safety are integral to the paramotor syllabus, and students are also taught that a fire extinguisher should be readily available when they launch from their own sites.
- Pilots are repeatedly taught not to raise their feet prematurely just because they feel the wing beginning to develop lift on the take-off run. There may well be enough lift to lessen the pilot's effective weight but not enough to totally support him and 20-30kgs of paramotor equipment. Pilots are taught that, even after achieving lift-off, they should still keep running in the air for a short while – almost like a cartoon character.
- Before a student embarks on his first paramotor flight, a thorough briefing is given on command & communication, back-up communications, the things that could go wrong and emergency procedures, and what to do in an emergency or communication failure.
- There is currently no requirement for any paramotor manufacturer to certify machines for airworthiness or design them to any recognised safety standard. It is up to schools which model they choose, but the main considerations are likely to be cost, weight and ease of use. The puncturing of a fuel tank is an extremely rare and unusual incident. Most fuel tanks are made of some kind of polypropylene because metal is heavier, and weight is critical. They are mounted underneath the engine in 99% of all paramotors for both CofG purposes as well as negating the fire risk of petrol leaking onto the engine if mounted above. The BHPA has no jurisdiction to enforce a particular manufacturer's machine to be used in schools for training.
- Training to fly a paramotor by flying a trike first is not necessary, impractical and is in fact more technical. It is physically easier because the pilot is sitting down but is technically harder to control the wing and avoid roll-over incidents. Training wheels would not be effective at preventing a premature feet-up touchdown incident. The trajectory and force would be mainly downward and not sufficiently forward to enable wheels to dissipate the energy. Furthermore, with most training done on grass; the wheels would need to be of a substantial size to work. In such an incident, the propeller would be turning at maximum rpm and the sudden jolt of the chassis hitting the ground would likely cause the motor to flex on its rubber mountings followed by deformation of the chassis-mounted propeller cage. The propeller and cage clearance is quite small and this deformation and engine movement may be enough for the propeller to hit the cage disintegrating either itself, the cage or both.
- This incident would have been reported by the CFI of the school involved on the BHPA's online Incident Reporting Scheme and will be discussed by the BHPA's Technical Officers in the fullness of time. Recommendations may follow, and any important points that should be made generally known to other pilots will get publicised in the *Safety Matters* page of the BHPA's magazine: SkyWings.

CHIRP Comment: It sounds like a potentially serious incident was saved by your instructor's radio call and your quick reaction in response. A good save! The Board felt that there was little that CHIRP could add to the engineering elements of the incident regarding fuel tanks etc without straying into deep technical debate, but the reporter had raised a number of interesting suggestions that had been addressed by the BHPA comments. In respect of the human factors issues, other than following the correct technique, one element that might be worth dwelling on was to recognise and stress that those who see issues developing can prevent potential accidents by early intervention as had happened with the instructor saving the day by calling on the radio. Another aspect was that pilots should always be ready to abandon a take-off at any stage – a comprehensive contingencies brief prior to commencing a take-off represents time well spent in any field of aviation.

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Report No.4 – Poorly performed check flight

Report Text: [Pilot name] flies a [Type] gyrocopter out of [Airfield]. He lives in [Foreign country] and comes to the UK twice a year to fly his gyro. He had a check flight with me yesterday. I told him that he was not safe enough to fly by himself, even though legally he can. He will fly today even though he wasn't at the required standard in my opinion yesterday. Today the weather is more challenging, and I fear for his safety. I have advised him that he needs more training before he goes flying. Lessons Learned - There is a law on currency that has not aided in the safety of this pilot in this instance.

Subsequent Comments by the Reporter: I am a gyrocopter instructor. I did not teach [Pilot name]. He bought-in to a syndicate based at my airfield. I did the check flight with him having confirmed he was current and had done the required number of hours to stay legal. However, he is known to be very complacent and believes he is better than he is. He only has about 15-20 hours on type. The check-flight was to keep him within the rules of his syndicate agreement. He was not of a good enough standard to pass his GST and I fear for his safety and the safety of others. He did not fly the next day in the end but was due to fly again before he returned to [Foreign country]. He flies for a week or so every 6 months. He had an airspace awareness course just recently because he entered controlled airspace without knowing. He believes my assessment of his flying was unfair and as such is extremely likely to go flying.

CHIRP contacted the CAA about whether instructor privileges should be changed to permit a pass/fail assessment during check flights and received the following comments.

CAA Comments: Currently, there is little that the instructor can do in this instance other than to urge the pilot to conduct further training. The suggestion that instructor privileges with regard to instructor flights could be redefined is useful, although it may not be considered appropriate by all elements of the GA community so further consideration and discussion would be required. However, we currently have much work ongoing regarding safety risks (loss-of-control, mid-air collision, CFIT), and improving pilot proficiency is a recurrent theme in addressing these; the CAA will therefore look to see if this aspect might be incorporated as part of that work.

CHIRP Comment: If, as appears in this case, the syndicate rules do not require a judgement of competence following a check flight it could be considered a pointless exercise. One potential avenue available to this instructor was to alert the nominated head of the syndicate because there may be insurance implications if a pilot who has been judged to be unfit to fly were to have an accident. Another avenue would be for the instructor to report the pilot concerned to the CAA through the whistle-blowing initiative, but this is not wholly satisfactory in itself given that they were probably unlikely to receive a timely response before the subject pilot flew again. Ultimately, syndicates are encouraged to insert clauses into their agreements such that check flights not only have to be completed at the required interval, but that they also had to be flown to a standard acceptable to the instructor concerned, otherwise the pilot will not be permitted to operate the syndicate aircraft.

This is a recurrent theme that also reflects the fact that instructors have no authority to pass comment on the quality of a pilot's performance during a biennial instructor flight as a requirement for revalidation by experience, merely that the flight had taken place. Had the flight been conducted by an examiner as part of a revalidation flight or proficiency test then the matter would have been more

clear-cut in that a pass or fail assessment could be made. Fundamentally, instructors are placed in a difficult situation in that they have to ask themselves how they would respond to any investigation should an accident occur. To reiterate, in the instance of a biennial flight, an instructor signing a pilot's logbook merely records that an instructor flight has taken place, and instructors are not permitted to comment on its conduct. All that an instructor can do is to appeal to the better nature of the pilot and encourage them to conduct further training to address any weak areas. In CHIRP's opinion, the privileges afforded to instructors regarding assessing and acting on the outcomes of instructor flights are less than ideal, and the UK's forthcoming exit from EASA oversight may hopefully permit a more effective national policy on the conduct and assessment of such flights.

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Report No.5 – Transition Level vs Minimum Sector Altitude

Report Text: We are now mandated to inform every aircraft of the Transition Level. At my unit, this is done via the ATIS. The Transition Level is based on the Transition Altitude, which outside CAS in the UK is based on the standard 3000ft. At our unit in Class G, we must work on that, despite our Minimum Safe Sector Altitude being 5600ft. This means we transmit a Transition Level which is not Terrain Safe and is below Minimum Sector Altitude (MSA). This is inherently unsafe yet mandated by the CAA.

CHIRP Comment: As the reporter comments, the standard Transition Altitude in Class G airspace in UK is 3000ft, and this can be below MSA at certain airfields. According to ICAO Doc 7030, the Transition Level (the lowest flight level for use above the Transition Altitude) "...shall be located at least 300m (1000ft) above the transition altitude to permit the transition altitude and the transition level to be used concurrently in cruising flight, with vertical separation ensured." As the reporter states, it is therefore possible for the Transition Level to be below local MSA. However, as stated in SERA.5015 (Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) — Rules applicable to all IFR flights), the minimum levels when IFR are:

...an IFR flight shall be flown at a level which is not below the minimum flight altitude established by the State whose territory is overflown, or, where no such minimum flight altitude has been established:

- (1) over high terrain or in mountainous areas, at a level which is at least 600m (2000ft) above the highest obstacle located within 8km of the estimated position of the aircraft;*
- (2) elsewhere than as specified in (1), at a level which is at least 300m (1000ft) above the highest obstacle located within 8km of the estimated position of the aircraft.*

CHIRP contacted the CAA for their view and they confirmed that, when VFR, pilots will be expected to visually ensure terrain separation and, when IFR, they must ensure that they maintain either 1000ft or 2000ft above the highest obstacle within 8km (~5nm) of the estimated position of their aircraft irrespective of the Transition Level.

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Report No.6 – Brushing up on weak points.

Report Text: During our "should not fly" [COVID-19] stand down is perhaps a good time to reflect on our own 'Farley's' with an eye on returning to normal flight we hope. Use these days out of the air constructively by brushing up on your individual weak points, call and chat to your instructor or read through your POH (Pilot Operating Handbook) again. For example, it'd be great if RT teachers/examiners opened up pay-for-RT sessions for those of us who still find a zone transit too daunting to try. Something else I can recommend [especially after a long period without use] is starting your engine/s with your headset off, or at least off enough, after requesting start to listen - you know your machine, you know your engine very well, how it sounds, how it feels - is everything right? What's that slight chuffing noise? Is that normal or is it exhaust escaping? That background ticking noise? Shut down and take a look - never be in a rush to get going. I've found a loose exhaust manifold bracket or ball joint, or broken securing spring in the past, and all it took was a few seconds of listening.

CHIRP Comment: The reporter raises some useful points regarding the return to flying post the COVID-19 layoff. His reference to the 'Farley's' is in respect of personal pilot currency, for which John Farley (the famous Harrier test pilot) drew up a checklist that he used so that he could ensure that he remained proficient in the various critical aspects of flying. He also offered some practical suggestions on how to devise a personal training programme and incorporate it into regular flying so that precious time and money is saved yet essential skills are kept to the standard required should an emergency occur or conditions require a certain level of skill, for example, a crosswind landing. An associated 'Farley Card' can be found on the General Aviation Safety Council (GASCo) website at the following link, and this is a good starting point for considering where you might need to focus when brushing up your skills after a lay-off: <https://www.gasco.org.uk/flight-safety-information/personal-currency>. The LAA and CAA have also prepared recommendations and guidance about the return to flying and they can be found at the links in the editorial.

The reporter also mentioned the value of practicing RT to gain confidence, especially after a long lay-off. A very good idea, and another source of help in this respect is the Skyway Code and CAP 413, both of which have some useful tips on RT phraseology and use. Whilst on the topic of RT and ATC, the issue of currency isn't just confined to pilots. ATCOs and FISOs also need to regain competency skills as they returned to duties. In this respect, ATCOs are required to have a check with an examiner as they return from any furlough to ensure they are up to speed and to cover any human factors issues. And pilots should remember that even controllers who have remained in the controlling environment will have been experiencing 'underload' due to the paucity of aircraft flying during the layoff, so give them some leeway and consideration too as they also ramp up to their normal levels of operation.

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Contact us

Steve Forward - Director Aviation - GA, Flight Crew and ATC
Terry Dudley/Phil Young - Deputy Director Engineering - Ground Handling and Engineering
Stephanie Dykes - Cabin Crew Programme Manager & Company Secretary - Cabin Crew

CHIRP, One Kingdom Street, Paddington Central, London, W2 6BD
01252 378947 | reports@chirp.co.uk | www.chirp.co.uk

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