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News and advice for the training professional knowledge, best practice and standardisation

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Controlled airspace infringements

In the instructor and examiner community, we all strive to achieve the highest of standards whilst we train our students to fly. Instructing and examining places unique demands upon the individual, not only are they expected to instruct or assess, but also recognise mistakes and mitigate the effects of those mistakes that perhaps aren't caught in time. In addition to this, the instructor/examiner also has to maintain high levels of situational awareness and must have an accurate mental model of other traffic and airspace in relation to the aircraft. Also, he or she will also need to monitor aircraft systems, RT and at the same time be mindful of the mental and physical state of the student.

It is very easy for our situational awareness to be compromised and we should all be aware that this is a common threat to us every time we get airborne. Between 2011 and 2015, there have been 380 infringements of controlled airspace by aircraft that were engaged in training or instruction – an average of 76 per year!

- Available data would seem to suggest that about 20% of the annual infringements are committed by solo student pilots - about 15 per annum.
- This indicates that 61 infringements a year happen whilst a qualified instructor or examiner was acting as the PIC. To put it another way, five instructors or examiners per month are infringing controlled airspace.

Some of the data and MORs indicate that a number of the infringements during training are vertical penetrations of controlled airspace. Further research has found that very often these infringements occur when the instructor is training for upper air exercises such as; recovery from unusual attitudes, stalling and other basic handling exercises. This is a major threat when workload in the cockpit is high for both parties.

This workload may at times compromise the mental capacity of the commander and the aircraft may be allowed to stray either upwards or laterally into CAS and within seconds an infringement has happened.



Documents

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Embarrassing at best and potentially critical for those affected by loss of separation!

So, what can we as professional pilots do to try and reduce the number of infringements?

- We all teach the HASELL checks, but are we being mindful enough of the airspace boundaries in our local flying area?
- Could we fly a little further afield and find less restrictive volumes of airspace within which to instruct?
- Could we spend a little more time on the ground briefing with the student, actively studying the airspace, and thus conveying the seriousness of honouring the boundaries?

Much of the feedback that we have received from the flying community (ATOs, Pilots, Examiners, Airfields etc) as a result of airspace infringement seminars, Local Airspace Infringement Working Groups, and infringement workshops would suggest that the standards of PPL Navigation may be poor and that the navigation theoretical examinations have become inadequate for the demands of the modern pilot.

This issue has been accepted and addressed by the CAA and new theoretical knowledge exams are currently being drafted that address the implications of penetrating airspace without the necessary clearance, the use of transponders and GPS navigation systems. Theoretical knowledge is the foundation and works hand in hand with practical training but ultimately, the proficiency of a pilot and his or her ability to fly safely and legally within the UK's complex airspace relies on us, the instructors and examiners.

In the world of professional training, we should all remember that what is demonstrated and taught first, will be what the student remembers and then emulates. Good practices start from day one and the importance of showing the significance of Controlled Airspace and understanding the impact of infringements cannot be underestimated.

Stalling... an update to clear up any confusion!

Recognition and recovery from stalls:

A series of stalls will be required and the examiner will brief the sequence of these both in pre-flight and in the air.

- Normally the first stall will be in the clean configuration, entered from straight and level flight, with the throttle(s) closed. The applicant is to recover when the aircraft has reached the stalled condition (see note 1).
- The second stall will be from an approach configuration, with approach flap setting gear down and low power. The stall should be initiated from a turn (level or descending with about 20° AOB) and the applicant should recover at the first indication of a stall (see note 2).
- The third stall will be in the landing configuration with full flap, gear down and low power. The stall should be initiated from straight flight in a slight descent as if established on final approach to land (i.e. not climbing) the applicant should recover at the first indication of a stall (see note 2).
- All recoveries shall be made with the minimum loss of height and returning to a clean climb configuration at V_y maintaining directional control or possibly to level flight if instructed to do so by the examiner.

Note 1: The stalled condition can exist at any attitude and airspeed, and may be recognised by continuous stall warning activation (if fitted and serviceable); and one of the following:

1. buffeting, which could be heavy at times;
2. lack of pitch authority and/or roll control;
3. inability to arrest the descent rate.

Note 2: First indication of a stall means the initial aural, tactile or visual sign of an impending stall, which can be either naturally or synthetically induced.

NB: When examiners are conducting the pre-flight briefing they should ask the candidate to show the examiner a stall in the 'stalled condition' and recover when the candidate recognises this condition using the standard stall recovery with minimum height loss. If the candidate recovers earlier than expected, then the examiner should ask the candidate to repeat the exercise and recover on the command of the examiner.

Guidance on the number of stalls to be covered on the SE(A) ST/PC

There is some confusion between examiners on how many stalls need to be carried out the SE(A) ST/PC. The main cause for this confusion comes from the change of wording in the UK CAA FEH 2014 and the current version of the FEH 2016. However, the FEH is being reviewed and updated to comply with Part-FCL. In Part-FCL – Appendices, AMC and GM, Appendix 9, B the specific requirements for the aeroplane category and content of the training/skill test/proficiency check gives a clear explanation on what the "Mandatory" items are for when using the standard ST/PC Content check list for items that need to be complete. Therefore: