

Causal Factor Analysis of Airspace Infringements in the United Kingdom

1 January – 31 December 2018

A report by the Causal Factor Working Group, a sub-group of
the CAA's Airspace Infringement Working Group

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Introduction

An airspace infringement is the unauthorised entry of an aircraft into notified airspace. This includes flight in controlled airspace (CAS) comprising Control Areas, Control Zones and Terminal Manoeuvring Areas, or in Prohibited or Restricted airspace (either permanent or temporary in establishment), active danger areas, aerodrome traffic zones (ATZ), radio mandatory zones (RMZ) or transponder mandatory zones (TMZ).

Any airspace infringement has the potential to be a serious safety incident which may result in a mid-air collision or AIRPROX. An airspace infringement is a reportable occurrence in accordance with Regulation (EU) 376/2014 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1018.

In 2018 there were a total of 1,358 airspace infringements reported through Mandatory Occurrence Report (MOR) or Alleged Breach of Air Navigation Legislation (ABANL) reports compared with 1,162 in 2017; this equated to an increase of circa 17% between 2017 and 2018. The rise in number can be attributed to improved reporting standards by ANSPs, activity sponsors (in the case of temporary airspace structures such as TDA and RA(T)) and pilots. Of these, 519 were investigated by the CAA's Infringement Coordination Group. The reasons for the selection of these infringements is shown in Appendix 1.

Not all occurrences were reported against UK licenced pilots. Investigations into airspace infringements by military pilots are administered by the Ministry of Defence; infringements by non-UK licenced pilots in UK airspace are administered collaboratively with the relevant pilot licencing state. However a UK-based civilian pilot will, where known, be contacted and asked to submit a report, either in the form of a pilot-initiated MOR, the use of the Post-infringement Questionnaire (found at <https://airspacesafety.com/infringement/infringement-form/>) or via free text emails or letters. These reports are analysed annually by the Airspace Infringement Working Group (AIWG) to identify causal factors and trends, allowing the CAA and industry partners to identify work streams and focal areas that will enable cross industry groups to work towards reducing the number and consequences, of airspace infringements.

This analysis was carried out by the Causal Factor Working Group (CFWG) (part of the AIWG). The Group comprised three experienced General Aviation pilots with a span of operations over several areas of aviation; one of the members was also a PhD student in Human Factors who is researching their role in airspace infringements in particular, and pilot error generally. The report is not to serve as a download of statistical data; relevant statistics on monthly and annual airspace infringements may be found on the Airspace and Safety Initiative website at (<https://airspacesafety.com/facts-stats-and-incidents/>). Some data relating to airspace infringements from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018 can be found at appendix 2.