

Australian Ballooning Federation

PILOTS CIRCULAR

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Pilots Circular is produced by the Australian Ballooning Federation Inc., and contains operational and safety information for all Australian balloonists. All ABF members – from the newest student to the most experienced pilot – are invited to contribute to PC on issues you feel other pilots may wish to know about, or to raise questions that you would like information about. Thanks to all members who contributed to this issue.

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Registration changes due

November 15 2005 was the closing date for transfer to the new CASR Part 47 aircraft registration arrangements. **If you have not yet completed and sent in the transfer application** (many aircraft owners have not) you should have received a reminder letter from CASA allowing you another 90 days from the date of that letter.

Get it done now – otherwise CASA may suspend or cancel your registration! For more information go to: www.casa.gov.au/casadata/register/part47/oct05change.htm.

Is that meant for me?

Information you receive from CASA or other bodies may apply to other aircraft but not balloons. A recent example is the requirement to disable an aircraft when leaving it unattended (we always do!). Another example is the need for a personal security check to obtain a pilot ID – a private balloon pilot should only need this if they wish to launch or land within a fenced off runway area at an aerodrome, ie the area usually restricted to airport staff. Commercial balloon pilots do require it, and should apply to CASA by the end of 2005. Any questions – call CASA on 131 747.

Operations at Non-Towered Aerodromes

Have you learned the new procedures? Are you sure what to do when you next fly? If so you can ignore this reminder.

If not, read the DOTARS package and Pilots Circular Issue 9, and be sure you understand them. Some reminders below:

The main changes are - MBZ's cease to exist, CTAF procedures now apply at all non-towered aerodromes, CTAF no longer has fixed boundaries but slightly different radio procedures apply within 10NM (18.5 km) of any non-towered aerodrome. Radio frequencies generally will not change.

A 'non-towered' aerodrome is one where there is no control tower or the tower is not active (also called a 'non-controlled' aerodrome).

Since 24 November you should not be flying unless you:

- have a **current** air navigation chart for your intended flying area and locate any aerodromes in the area
- know and follow the new procedures when within 10NM of an aerodrome
- in particular, carry and use VHF airband radio where required (you must have a CASA radio licence or an ABF radio operator certificate to use it)

You should use the new procedures, but also be alert for other aircraft which may NOT remember to use them.

Be aware that aircraft making straight-in approaches to land at an aerodrome are now supposed to advise this on radio using the words 'JOIN FINAL' instead of 'MAKE STRAIGHT IN APPROACH'. And faster aircraft may make their first radio call from as much as 30NM away as they approach.

If you have any questions please email me on sfisher@picknowl.com.au or phone 0415 454 004 anytime.

Broomrape PZ update

The very large PZ detailed in Pilots Circular Issue 1 in the general area of Murray Bridge (SA) is still active. ERSA GEN Special Procedures number 8 advises that the noxious broomrape seed is spread mostly by footwear including socks, and that 'a decontamination service has been established for those who enter the area to use prior to departure'.

It would probably be impossible to decontaminate a balloon! So this remains a NO FLY area. More precise details are available from ABF Ops Manager Ian Hogben who lives nearby, or from ABF SA Rep Steve Kenny.

Summer Flying and Fire Bans

Details vary from state to state. Please read Pilots Circular Issue 8 Dec 2004 'Summer Flying'. No changes have been notified since then.

Action for pilots

- Be aware of any fire ban districts and boundaries in your flying area. Mark the boundaries on your flying map if you need to
- Know the fire season for each district and the restrictions that apply
- Carry the required firefighting equipment in your vehicle
- Check for fire bans the night before and the day of a planned flight, eg on TV news, or via your state rural fire service (a handy starting point is Fire Services Links of Australia on www.vicnet.net.au/~gscfa/fire-links.htm.)

Before flying in summer check your load chart – after winter flying, summer loads can be surprisingly different. Allow for the ambient (day) temperature to increase as you fly in the morning. Load a bit more lightly for extra response in case of a mild thermal before landing.

- In a 77, about ONE PERSON LESS PER 10 DEGREES rise in ambient temperature.
- In a 180, about ONE PERSON LESS PER 4 DEGREES rise – the larger difference is in proportion to the envelope size.

Fire Extinguishers

All balloons must carry a minimum 1kg fire extinguisher in the basket. The dry powder type is usual and preferred, however halon is also permitted provided it is installed in or carried in an aircraft (ie, in the basket only, not the car or trailer). If you have changed or are considering changing to a different type of extinguisher, read CASA Airworthiness Bulletin AWB/26/002 on the CASA website at www.casa.gov.au/airworth/awb/26/002.pdf.

Retrieve vehicle fire danger

Many modern cars are fitted with catalytic converters, which remain very hot even after the engine is switched off. In some parts of Australia it is illegal to drive into paddocks unless the converter is shielded to avoid starting a fire. Heavy fines may apply.

Off-season maintenance

Summer flying break can be the ideal time to:

- Soak your nylon poles
- Clean and varnish your basket
- Service your fan motor and do a careful structural check (frame, guard, wheels)
- Service your trailer (structural, wiring and plug, wheel nuts and bearings, tyre condition and pressure)
- **AND do the annual inspection on your balloon.**

Don't be a dunce and leave these things till your first flight for 2006 – or worse still, the next balloon event you go to!

Theory Exams

Are you an isolated student pilot finding it hard to get together with an ABF Examiner to sit ABF theory exams? It may be possible to do the exams under supervision at a local flying school – contact ABF Ops Manager Ian Hogben for details.

It is highly recommended to pass all exams before you start flight training or at least within the first 8 hours. That way you can understand and apply the theory as you fly.

You will still require an ABF Examiner for your final flight test and solo. If you have difficulty getting an Examiner to do this within reasonable time, tell Ian Hogben.

Balloonist guilty of low flying

A hot air balloonist, whose low flying was suspected of causing the death of a cow near Morrinsville (NZ) three years ago, was left deflated in court in December last year.

In a reserved decision, Judge Joanna Maze found Max Imstepf guilty of low flying and careless operation of a hot air balloon, and remanded him for sentence.

Imstepf was reluctant to comment, but fellow balloonist Alistair Malcolm, who gave evidence for the defence at the hearing, likened the implications of the judgment on balloonists to that against Christchurch sports events organiser Astrid Andersen. In September, the Court of Appeal overturned Ms Andersen's conviction for criminal nuisance after she was charged over the death of a rider in a 2001 cycle race she organised.

Mr Malcolm said the judge had ruled Imstepf was flying too low and too long, which could have implications for the annual Balloons Over Waikato festival.

The decision followed a six-day hearing in Hamilton District Court in September 2004 to establish the circumstances surrounding the death of Cow 208 on the Faulkner farm near Morrinsville in April 2002. The cow was found dead shortly after Imstepf's balloon flew overhead and landed nearby. Robyn Faulkner told the court she saw the cows "snorting and steaming" after she heard an unfamiliar loud and repeating noise as she worked in the cowshed.

Imstepf claimed the Faulkners received an inflated insurance payout for the cow, and its death wasn't caused by the balloon flying over. Judge Maze said it was not necessary for her to determine the cow's cause of death.

"The real issue is, did the Faulkners' cows stampede when the balloon passed over the farm that morning. I am entirely satisfied they did," Judge Maze said. She was also satisfied that the evidence had proved the cow was dead and removed after the balloon had landed.

"It is singularly unfortunate Mr Imstepf has taken the stance he has on this particular issue as it has undoubtedly worsened the dispute between him and the Faulkners and lengthened this hearing," she said.

- from the New Zealand Herald

MERRY CHRISTMAS and SAFE FLYING IN 2006!