

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. ABF pilot and student pilot members receive Pilots Circular (and a PC folder) by post as part of their annual membership. PC is also available on the ABF website [www.abf.net.au](http://www.abf.net.au) for all to read.*

*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 the pilots around Australia and others who have contributed to this issue.*

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## November 27 Airspace Changes

Unless you hold a CASA licence you probably have not received 2 blue booklets explaining NAS (National Airspace System) changes which were introduced on November 27. The recent changes affect balloons as explained below. More changes will follow in future.

### **Balloon flights in Class G (non-controlled) airspace (most private balloon flights)**

- **You must check the latest air charts**, as there have been changes to all charts. The chart you should use (in order of preference) is VTC, VNC or ERC-Low, whichever covers your flying area. If you do not carry the chart when you fly, you must have current airspace marked on your flying map.
- **When using VHF radio**, there is less emphasis on using area frequencies. Some area frequencies and all area frequency boundary information have been removed from the charts.

Instead, pilots should give more emphasis to monitoring the frequency of any nearby aerodrome, to be aware of other aircraft. Appropriate frequencies include:

- **MBZ or CTAF frequency** (shown in ERSA or on the chart),
- **Multicom 126.7** if no other frequency is shown,
- 123.45 to talk to other aircraft, or
- 121.5 for emergencies.

You can purchase the latest charts and ERSA from Airservices Australia, telephone 1300 306 630, or on [www.airservicesaustralia.com](http://www.airservicesaustralia.com).

### Balloon flights in controlled airspace

- **There is now a lot of additional Class E airspace.** Mostly it replaces other controlled airspace above 8500FT. Above Class D aerodromes it also replaces Class C airspace from 4500FT upwards. (Class D aerodromes are at Albury, Alice Springs, Coffs Harbour, Hamilton Island, Hobart, Launceston, Mackay, Maroochydore, Rockhampton and Tamworth.) When flying over a class D aerodrome, you should monitor the **tower frequency**.
- VFR flights in Class E airspace do not need a **flight plan**. Private balloon operations are still subject to ABF endorsement and **CASA written approval**.
- Carrying and operating a serviceable **mode C transponder** is mandatory for all aircraft in Class C and Class E airspace, and in any airspace at and above 10,000FT. It should be **switched on and set to ALT and 1200**, unless advised otherwise.
- Pilots should not broadcast or chat to other aircraft on ATC frequencies. Calls should be directed to ATC or Flightwatch if operating on those frequencies.

For more NAS info phone 1800 007 024 or visit [www.dotars.gov.au/airspacereform](http://www.dotars.gov.au/airspacereform).

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## Landing Incident

During a fast landing at the end of a late afternoon flight, the basket bounced a couple of times, and on the last impact a passenger came out. The basket then dragged over the passenger, resulting in a badly bruised shoulder and leg. There were no other injuries or damage to the balloon, pilot or other 2 passengers.

Information gained from debrief of the pilot and passengers (comments by Simon Fisher who was National Safety Officer at the time):

(1) Landing was fast but within normal safe limits. The pilot had briefed the passengers to stay low and hold on tight for the expected fast landing, and the passengers were in position before landing. The passenger who fell out was at the rear of the basket. The basket was too large for the passenger to be able to lean back against a secure object in the direction of travel. The passenger held onto the upper rope handle but did not hold on to the lower rope handle which was also available.

### **NSO comments:**

*For fast landings in particular, passengers should lean their back or side firmly against the leading edge of the basket or a tank in a similar position, so they are braced towards the direction of travel. Where lower rope handles are provided (out of fashion these days) one hand should hold the upper handle and one the lower handle, as this gives greater stability.*

*Before take-off, the pilot should actually get the passengers into position for a fast landing rather than simply telling them or demonstrating it. This way the pilot can*

*correct them if necessary, and passengers are more likely to remember the correct details at landing time.*

(2) The smart vent was not fully deployed until later in the landing.

**NSO comments:**

*Recommended fast landing sequence is – get passengers in landing position, level out the balloon about a metre above the ground, turn the gas off, quickly open the smart vent fully, then the pilot should also hold on and brace firmly to avoid coming out of the basket. This technique could have reduced or avoided the bounces.*

*The smart vent can make fast landings much safer, provided you use it effectively.*

The pilot, who had more than 50 hours as PIC, was required to undertake a flight with an ABF instructor and to demonstrate good briefing practice and landing technique, including technique suitable for fast landing.

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## SUMMER FLYING

Due to the continuing drought in many areas:

- Bushfire risk is heightened,
- Fire Danger Season has started earlier in some areas, and
- Farmers are more sensitive about losing income because of fire.

**Fire safety and good farmer relations** are more important than ever this summer.

### A Checklist for Summer Flying

<b>Fire extinguishers</b>	Recently inspected Ready to hand when inflating <b>A 9 litre water extinguisher is highly recommended in the retrieve vehicle and beside the basket when inflating</b> (see incident report in December 2003 Aeronotes)
<b>Crew and passengers</b>	No smoking! Natural fibre clothing, sturdy shoes, long sleeves Know how to use your fire extinguishers
<b>Gas equipment</b>	Burner and tanks in good working order Seals checked recently Any minor gas leaks have been fixed
<b>Inflation</b>	<b>No dry grass or other flammable material for 4 metres radius</b> (again refer to the incident report in Dec 2003 Aeronotes). Scoop in position before fan turned on. Fireproof blanket under the burner for extra protection
<b>Landing</b>	<b>PILOT LIGHTS OUT!</b> (Always – not just in summer). <b>Retrieve vehicles with catalytic converters stay out of dry paddocks.</b> Diesel engines are OK. If in doubt, carry out.

**Farmer relations**

Tell farmer all flames are out before touching the ground.  
Better still – demonstrate how this is done.

**Fire Danger Season**

Summer flying arrangements in Australia are different from state to state. Permits are required to fly a balloon in some areas. **Local arrangements vary, and you are strongly advised to check with local balloonists and bushfire authorities.** The following notes are intended as a guide only.

A Fire Danger Season is declared in most parts of central and southern Australia, roughly between November and April. Dates vary between districts, and the published dates may be changed at short notice if necessary.

During the Fire Danger Season strict rules apply to lighting any kind of fire in the open, including gas barbecues. A balloon may be treated as a gas appliance or as an aircraft – interpretation varies – but either way the fire authorities are generally prepared to facilitate ballooning provided it is done carefully.

**Total Fire Bans**

On days of extreme fire danger, a Total Fire Ban may be declared in a given district. Bans are usually announced the night before, but may be announced (or cancelled) on the day if weather conditions are not as forecast.

Total Fire Ban days are often hot and windy, and unsuitable for ballooning. However, commercial balloon operators may get a permit to fly on total ban days in NSW or Victoria, and may fly in ACT. Notification is usually required to the bushfire authority within 24 hours before flying. Special conditions may apply.

## **SUMMER FLYING – STATE BY STATE**

*This is a general guide only – check local details*

	<u>Fire Danger Days</u>	<u>Total Fire Ban Days</u>	<u>Contact</u>
<b>ACT</b>	follow fire rules	commercial may fly	Rural Fire Service
<b>NSW</b>	follow fire rules	commercial permit available	Rural Fire Service
<b>NT</b>	use common sense	balloons may fly	Outback Ballooning
<b>Qld</b>	use common sense	balloons may fly	Rural Fire Brigades
<b>SA</b>	follow fire rules	balloons don't fly	SABAC or Country Fire Service
<b>VIC</b>	all balloons require Schedule 14 permit	commercial balloons may get Section 40 permit	Country Fire Authority
<b>WA</b>	private and commercial balloons normally don't fly		WABAC