

Coaching Corner...

Getting back into dual instruction...

PCS Head of Coaching **David Cockburn** offers advice on flying with a Coach in these COVID-19 times

In the June issue of this magazine I reminded everyone that getting back in the air after a long lay off required careful preparation and thought. Even if we had been able to maintain a level of currency pre-COVID, most of us will have been flying less than usual, so we should all continue to treat our flying with caution. The importance of careful pre-flight checks remains, as does the need to avoid challenging weather and complex navigation routes. Air Traffic Control is currently very stretched and short-handed, so we need to be careful to give notified airspace a wide berth, and don't assume a particular piece of airspace is no longer active just because it was closed last week, yesterday or even an hour ago.

However, we must also take account of the sensitivities of those who are not so fortunate and can't fly for fun. The CAA has reported a large number of low flying complaints, and I can personally identify an aircraft which spent several minutes circling over my local town well below the required 1,000ft. Not only that but it generated a lot of noise. We need the support of the non-flying population if we are going to be allowed to extend, or even maintain, the privileges that we currently have.

Below Dual training is back on the agenda but demands some common sense precautions.

Coaching under COVID-19

Even though solo flying was initially permitted, dual flying was not, although many pilots needed, or desired guidance from a Coach to gain or return to currency. Others need to learn about their new aircraft.

Dual training and testing for private flying was allowed to recommence by the Department for Transport from 4 July, subject to the government's COVID-secure guidelines.

However, without any means of knowing with certainty that the person next to us is completely free from the virus, we should justifiably wish to minimise any risk to everyone, including third parties. We need to carry out a risk assessment before every activity, and what follows are some suggestions for doing just that.

We are still required to maintain a specific physical space between ourselves and others outside our households whenever possible. However, even one metre separation will not be possible within an aircraft cockpit, so whatever mitigations we employ cannot be regarded as completely safe. Our risk assessments must take account of the fact that we are likely to:

- Breathe the same air in the cockpit
- Share several of the same controls



- Share the controls with others who may have used or will use the aircraft
- Share doors and handles, and access panels with the other pilot
- Share doors and handles, and access panels with others who have used or may use the aircraft.
- Share the aircraft seats and seat belts with others who have used or may use the aircraft
- Share the air, and touch maps and electronic devices, during brief and debrief
- Move the aircraft manually with others.

I do not wish to encourage Coaches, nor the pilots needing their services, to do anything with which they feel uncomfortable, and fully support any Coach who wishes to remain in lockdown, or feels they wish to restrict any coaching to particular individuals. However, for those who are prepared to carry out coaching flights, I suggest some possible mitigations.

Coaches may have advantages over an instructor employed by a flying school. It may be that the only person likely to use the aircraft before or after the flight will be the pilot who is being coached, which would restrict possible contagion to or from third parties.

Pre-flight

There should be a maximum of two persons on board during flight. It should go without saying that everyone involved must believe they themselves are virus-free and must also agree to accept the possible risk of virus transmission, and (I suggest) certify that in writing beforehand.

There are devices available to check people's temperature, which may indicate the presence of the virus. Several flying clubs already use these and record results. In any case, both the Coach and the pilot must log their own names and addresses, and those of everyone with whom contact is made under the government guidelines. If an NHS contagion app is available, downloading and activating it would also mitigate the risk of spreading any infection. It would be ideal if the aircraft had not been used by anyone other than the pilot and Coach in the previous 72 hours.

The pilot and / or their household members should prepare the aircraft for flight, carry out the daily check and sterilising (wipe down with alcohol as recommended by engineers) all access areas, doors, handles, access panels, and flight and auxiliary controls. The Coach should not be involved but if necessary, can assist in moving the aircraft (wearing gloves and maintaining distance) rather than involve third parties. The pilot and Coach should brief at two metres distance if possible, wash hands in accordance with the guidelines immediately before flight and approach the aircraft separately.

The pilot and Coach should don their own flying gloves (sanitised before flight) or protective gloves (if not already worn), and a clean face mask if at all possible (although it is vital that communication remains

clear). Ideally, they should wear their own flying coveralls or similar, which should have been washed if a cockpit has been shared with another person within a certain period. I suggest 14 days, but government guidelines may advise differently. In addition to the mask, the pilot and Coach should consider wearing goggles or spectacles. They should wear their own headsets, and if that is not possible the headset should be sterilised before flight (especially in the microphone area) and not used by anyone else for 72 hours afterwards.

In-flight

The cockpit should be ventilated as much as possible, so it is advisable to be dressed prepared for it to be a little chilly. It would be sensible to attempt to avoid physical contact, so Coaches should be ready and willing to make switch selections on their side of the cockpit when asked, even on a test.

Both occupants should try to only speak / make transmissions when facing away from the other crew member, but lookout must not be compromised. On training flights, consider sharing lookout responsibilities.

Post-flight

As soon as possible following engine stop, the crew should exit the aircraft in order to achieve the recommended separation distance from each other and wash their hands in accordance with the guidelines. The debrief should be carried out at two metres distance.

Unless a further flight with the same crew is anticipated, the pilot and / or their household should again sterilise access areas, doors, handles, access panels, and flight and ancillary controls. Refuelling procedures should include the wearing of protective gloves and sterilising touched surfaces afterwards.

If paperwork signatures are required, the pilot should complete as much as possible, under the Coach's guidance. The pilot can then leave their logbook, licence or debrief sheet as appropriate at the guideline separation distance for the Coach (perhaps wearing gloves) to sign. The paperwork, together with any charts or electronic devices which have been shared, could be placed inside a container, the exterior of which should be clean and only touched by the pilot's already washed or sterilised hands. After 72 hours, the pilot should be able to remove the contents of the container and use them or send them to other agencies if necessary. Any payment due could be transferred through internet banking.

Ideally, to provide additional protection against transmission, the pilot should avoid flying (or coming into close contact) with anyone for 14 days, apart from the same Coach or their own household. Similarly, the Coach should avoid flying (or coming into close contact) with anyone, apart from the same coached pilot or their own household, for the same period. Ideally, the aircraft cockpit should not be occupied by anyone other than

the same pilot, the Coach, or their own households for 72 hours after the coaching flight, or any subsequent flight.

Help from Coaches

I am sure that, despite any government permissions, there will be pilots who feel uncomfortable about sharing a cockpit with anyone, and Coaches are certainly at liberty to decide not to fly if they wish. However, one of the big advantages of the LAA's Pilot Coaching Scheme is that the Coaches are always more than willing to help.

Though current government restrictions may restrict contact that doesn't mean you can't get guidance from a Coach, and we can still provide advice while maintaining social distancing, either face to face, by telephone or online. Although many who built their own aircraft are probably quite familiar with its systems and capabilities, others may not be. In any case, the Coaches have a vast pool of knowledge about operating the aircraft in the LAA fleet, and if you are unhappy about flying with others it's probably an ideal time to expand your horizons. Knowledge gained on the ground is usually a good way to reduce time spent learning new skills in the air. Consider what you want to learn or improve once you feel more secure about the virus and give your local Coach a call now!

Ratings or medical running out?

Shortly after the government's COVID restrictions came into place, the CAA published exemptions to allow those of us whose ratings or medicals expired between 16 March and 31 October to have them extended to 22 November 2020, subject to certain conditions. These were published as *ORS (Official Record Series) 4 nos 1385 and 1378* to cover both EASA and UK licences. For most Class 2 or LAPL Medicals (there are additional requirements for those requiring additional checks), the pilot merely has to carry a copy of the relevant exemption with the original medical certificate.

For SEP, TMG, SSEA, and SLMG Ratings, any LAA

Coach can authorise the rating extension by signing the licence rating page. To extend the 12-month period of LAPL currency, the Coach can sign the logbook – there are CAA forms available if the Coach cannot sign the licence itself. However, by signing, the Coach is certifying that he or she has provided a formal briefing to the pilot covering the requirements listed in the relevant exemptions. As Coaches will be aware from *Notice to Coaches 5 for 2020*, we have provided reminders about the requirements and suggestions for the content of these briefings in PowerPoint presentations in the coaching section of the LAA website under 'Files and forms' and 'Documents for Coaches'.

Beware your moving map!

Recently, several areas of Controlled Airspace have been deactivated at quiet times, and we have been able to take advantage of flying in areas which had previously been difficult to access. Unfortunately, the CAA have identified in an Airspace Safety Initiative (ASI) update, that some moving map displays which include Notam information, may have been misleading pilots about the status of the airspace. They report that some moving map applications depict the airspace boundaries in rarely seen colours, and may visually show airspace being deactivated throughout the Notam period, when in fact the airspace is only classified as Class G for certain periods of time (the schedule) within the Notam period.

It's awkward that these marvellous aids on which (although we shouldn't) we often rely to keep us out of trouble, may be encouraging the very problem that they are intended to avoid. It means that we must be more careful than usual in reading the actual Notams themselves, whether displayed on an application or listed on the AIS website. The ASI update explains how to read the published Notam, but if we aren't sure or can't remember whether a piece of airspace is deactivated or not, we should treat it as still being active at all times. ■



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LAA
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PILOT COACHING SCHEME

Enforced break?
Revalidation required?
Get yourself back into the air!
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