

COVID 19 – Preparing to Return to Normal Flying Operations for General Aviation Pilot Training Organisations (‘Flying Clubs and Schools’)

CAP 1924

A large, abstract blue graphic that occupies the bottom two-thirds of the page. It features a gradient from light blue to dark blue, with a curved, geometric shape that tapers towards the bottom right corner.

Published by the Civil Aviation Authority, 2020

Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Beehive Ring Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

You can copy and use this text but please ensure you always use the most up to date version and use it in context so as not to be misleading, and credit the CAA.

Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to: ga@caa.co.uk

Edition 1: 20 May 2020

Edition 2: 27 May 2020 Amended text on page 3 has been underlined in red.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This CAA guidance document is intended to complement guidelines issued by HM Government, the Department for Transport and Public Health bodies.

You must only operate within the guidance around recreational flying activities as advised by Government.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that all advice is pertinent at time of publication, the CAA reserves the right to amend or withdraw this document to accommodate changes to HM Government policy, to correct errors and omissions or to reflect changes in national policy and best practice.

This document is used to supplement information published in [CAP1919](#).

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidance is to help General Aviation (GA) pilot training organisations and private pilots return safely to normal operations following the easing of Government Covid 19 related restrictions on recreational flying, which has resulted in an extended period of 'minimal or no GA flying'.

We appreciate that GA pilots will want to return to the air safely as soon as possible. In view of the extended period on the ground, the CAA recommends a few sensible precautions and things to consider before doing so. However, **you must only operate within the guidance around recreational flying activities as advised by Government.**

GENERAL HEALTH, WELLBEING & PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Is everyone fit and well? Remember, the cockpit of a GA aircraft is a very close environment, the club house may not be a large area. Are staff, club members and any permitted passengers clear of any symptoms of Covid 19 or any other decrease in medical fitness that may adversely affect flight safety? If you choose to wear any PPE you must ensure that they do not create a flight safety hazard or inhibit safe operation of the aircraft in any way.

Be mindful of any health guidance issued by Public Health Authorities concerning disinfecting and cleansing areas, washing hands, sharing of equipment etc. Do you know where facilities are available to ensure this happens? If these facilities are not available, for example at 'farm strips', do you need to bring them with you?

Consider whether it is necessary to take steps to disinfect surfaces inside the cockpit between flights, especially in operating environments with different pilots at the flying controls, eg flying schools.

Please see the following guide on disinfecting GA aircraft: [EASA Coronavirus Guide for Disinfection of General Aviation Aircraft](#)

Some people may consider installing some form of "screen" in the cabin to separate pilots for use when flights with others than members of the same household are permitted. This could have a significant, adverse effect on flight safety and the airworthiness of the aircraft. A modification/design change will need to be approved by the CAA or EASA, or an approved design organisation including organisations such as the LAA and BMAA, before any installation is undertaken.

FLYING CLUBS AND PILOT TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Although it is appreciated that organisations will wish to resume flight training programmes as soon as safely possible, forward planning and organisation will help make the transition back to normal operations as smooth and easy as possible. You must only operate within the guidance around recreational flying activities as advised by Government.

You may find high demand from customers and student pilots to start populating the flight training programme as soon as possible. Before doing so the following guidance may be helpful to Accountable Managers and Heads of Training to recommence operations safely and ensuring your responsibilities are met.

As the UK's independent aviation safety regulator, we understand pilots will be keen to get back in the air again. It is vital to remember that all pilots will experience some amount of "Skills fade / degradation" irrespective of your level of flying experience. When government restrictions allow shared flights with other than members of the same household, we would encourage the use of appropriate refresher training or club check flights before flying. Pilots that have not flown regularly since the last flying season or are 'low hours' may consider waiting until they can conduct refresher training or a club check flight before resuming recreational flying activities. Pilots who own and operate their own aircraft outside of a training environment are encouraged to visit their local Flying Club or School for this.

Back to the Club House

The first thing to consider is what kind of access will you be granted at the aerodrome? Those located at larger commercial aerodromes may find increased access restrictions are in force or certain PPE may be required, whereas those at smaller or unlicensed aerodromes may find nothing has changed.

You will be opening the building(s), which may have been closed at short notice - are all the facilities and utilities working? Think about what facilities you need to operate safely and legally, bearing in mind general HSE guidelines.

Your staff will be key to a successful and safe return to normal operations. Is everyone fit and well and available? If there are any significant changes to required key postholders or staff how are you managing these and does the CAA need to be informed before operations commence?

Be mindful of any general health guidance issued by Public Health Authorities concerning PPE, disinfecting and cleansing areas, washing hands, sharing of equipment etc. Are facilities available to ensure this can happen and are you managing your own facilities and infrastructure in line with this?

Organisations need to carefully consider the latest Government and CAA guidance or advice so you can decide what you need to do to fulfil these and make sure everyone involved in your operation knows and understands this. This will help keep people safe and support the smooth return to normal flying operations.

Before Starting Flight Operations

We understand aircraft generate income when flying and not when sat on the ground. There are a few things we recommend you consider before commencing straight back into a flight programme.

Instructor and Staff Meetings

The Flying Instructors, Operations and Ground staff are key to getting your organisation back up and running safely. It is worth spending the time to have a team meeting with your staff to discuss the recovery plans you have put in place, any new ways of working, any ideas and / or concerns they may have and to address these. The Instructors may have ideas about how to ease student pilots back into flying safely once Government guidance permits these activities.

It is likely that Instructors may need some time to conduct refresher flying themselves before conducting dual training flights once Government advice permits these activities. We therefore strongly encourage the Heads of Training / Chief Flying Instructors to conduct check flights with the Instructors as part of the return to normal operations and before they return to duty. There should be a particular focus on new or low hours Instructors who may have more skills fade than their more experienced colleagues.

Heads of Training and Accountable Managers must be satisfied that their Instructors' pilot licence and medical privileges, such as class, instrument and instructor validities, are correct before returning to flying duties. Some may have expired and if they were unable to take advantage of the CAA exemption will have to renew expired ratings and certificates. However, those that were able to take advantage of the exemptions published, thereby extending the validity of any class, instrument and instructor privileges until 22 November 2020, may only need the locally arranged refresher flight to get back up to speed and ready for Instructing duties.

Flight Programme

Before you start to populate a flight programme, you will need to check availability of aircraft and Instructors.

You may need to balance the needs of the Instructor cadre, self-fly hire and student pilots if the customer demand is sudden and unusually high. Using the different Instructor

capabilities, for example if the school has any Class Rating Instructors, they can be tasked with conducting the 'club check outs' leaving the Flying Instructors to focus on the student pilots requiring formal flight training.

Before recommencing flight operations, once Government guidance permits these activities, consider the following:

1. What will be the density of your flying programme and does this fit in with the aerodrome's plans and capacity? If they have restricted access to facilities/personnel it may affect your plans.
2. What types of flights will you be encouraging? We would recommend that, initially, flights focus on circuits and local area general handling so pilots get back up to speed in a controlled way. Best practice does not encourage allowing a pilot to have one short check out flight (once these flights are permitted) and then go off on a long cross-country flight to a new destination.
3. Ensure there is access to current flight safety information such as:
 - Meteorological information, TAF and Actuals and Met Form 214/215.
 - NOTAMs airspace and frequency changes.
 - Flight plans, if applicable.
4. Ensure student training records are up to date and any extensions to theoretical knowledge examinations (ORS4 No. 1353 and 1385) have been recorded.
5. Ensure Instructor records are up-to-date.
6. It is also worth considering introducing or encouraging a system whereby flight planning and performance calculations completed by club members or self-fly hire pilots are cross-checked by a Flight Instructor or another competent pilot.

Self-Fly Hire Pilots

Self-fly hire pilots (club members) who were able to take advantage of the CAA exemption, published extending the validity of any class and instrument privileges until 22 November 2020, are still recommended to have appropriate refresher training or club check out prior to flying solo again, once social distancing restrictions allow flights with others than members of the same household.

Pilots, including self-hire fly, should be reminded that before carrying any passengers (where permitted by Government guidance) the recency requirement still needs to be met and was NOT exempted from by the CAA.

Where pilots were unable to take advantage of the exemptions, as their class rating or instrument privileges had already expired before the Covid 19 exemptions became available, they will have to renew by Proficiency Check.

Student Pilots

Instructors will be aware that students will have experienced skill degradation during the extended period of 'minimal or no flying'. They will need some refresher training of previously flown exercises prior to recommencing their chosen pilot training course and it is essential before any student is sent on a solo flight.

We recommend that Instructors should review the training records as part of the in-brief with the student, recapping the exercises already completed and general training progress before going flying. Dependant on the length of time since the student pilot last flew this may require one or more refresher flights.

THE TRAINING AIRCRAFT FLEET

The first consideration before resuming flying operations should be to review any manufacturers' guidance on servicing requirements when the aircraft has not flown for an extended period (see CAA GA website for information on [Maintenance Check Flights](#) during Covid-19).

Pre-Flight

When checking the aircraft after the extended period of minimal or no flying be more diligent with the Check A. Pay attention to lubrication of flying controls, fuel drains, operation of equipment and binding of brakes, and check the general condition of the aircraft (especially control surfaces) for signs of any damage (by person or wildlife). This is especially important if the aircraft have not been hangered. If you do have any concerns seek advice from your Maintenance Organisation before flying.

Is the Fuel in the Aircraft Tanks Still Usable?

As part of the Check A, a comprehensive check of the fuel in the aircraft fuel tanks will be important. Has any water contamination occurred while the aircraft has been on the ground?

AVGAS octane rating dissipates when exposed to sunlight, moisture and oxygen. As a guide, AVGAS stored in a bowser or above ground tank has a shelf life of approximately 3 months. Fuel stored in an aircraft fuel tanks may have degraded significantly. If you have any concerns seek advice from your Maintenance Organisation before flying.

Are All the Aircraft Documents and Equipment Still Valid and 'In Date'?

1. Airworthiness Review Certificate.
2. Insurance.
3. OFCOM Radio installation licence.
4. Fire extinguishers and first aid kit.
5. GPS database.

Ensure that all defects are entered in the Aircraft Defect Log and if defects are deferrable ensure that they are documented correctly.

WHAT ABOUT AERODROME OR AIRFIELD CONSIDERATIONS?

What kind of access will you be granted at the aerodrome or airfield, has it changed and how will that affect your operations, customers and staff?

At licensed aerodromes the training organisation will need to liaise with the aerodrome operator (if not the same organisation) to ensure that they are happy for flying operations to recommence.

At unlicensed aerodromes the training organisation may need to consider the following prior to recommencing operations and CAP 793 Safe Operating Practices at Unlicensed Aerodromes may provide further guidance.

1. The condition of operating surface, runways, taxiways and any unexpected obstacles.
2. Has wildlife encroached? For example, any new rabbit holes.
3. Has the runway grass been cut?
4. If fuel is available, fuel in bowser or over/underground tank, has it been tested?
5. If an Air Traffic Service, for example Air Ground, is available and is it operational?

Liaising with the aerodrome operator and/or airfield owner is important so operations can safely and smoothly recommence.

RETURNING TO 'THE NORM'

As part of their recovery planning towards normal operations pilot training organisations should review and re-establish oversight of their every day, routine operations. ATOs should consider reviewing and updating their approved manuals, checking training records and establish which students could be close to any validity periods for examinations.

Throughout the process of re-starting operations, have you identified any new or previously unseen hazards that you have had to develop mitigations for? If yes, add them

to your hazard log / risk register and ensure they are adequately managed before operations commence.

Check third party liabilities and aircraft hull insurances are still valid, and that aircraft return to approved maintenance cycles.

Your allocated Inspector in the CAA General Aviation Unit will contact you soon to discuss oversight and inspection visits if your oversight visit was planned during this period.

FOOTNOTE

The CAA will continue to derive policy based on information published by the Department for Transport. All GA pilots and organisations are strongly urged to regularly check the following websites

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-recreational-general-aviation>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

And Finally

Safely Enjoy Your Flying!

GA Unit Team

May 2020