1999, Issue 1

VECTOR

Pointing to Safer Aviation

Pilot Decision-Making

On the morning of Friday, 9 January 1998, the pilot flew a Cessna 172 from Queenstown to Te Anau to pick up two passengers who needed to catch a connecting flight north from Queenstown later in the day. The aircraft took off for the return flight at about 0830 hours but did not arrive at Queenstown.

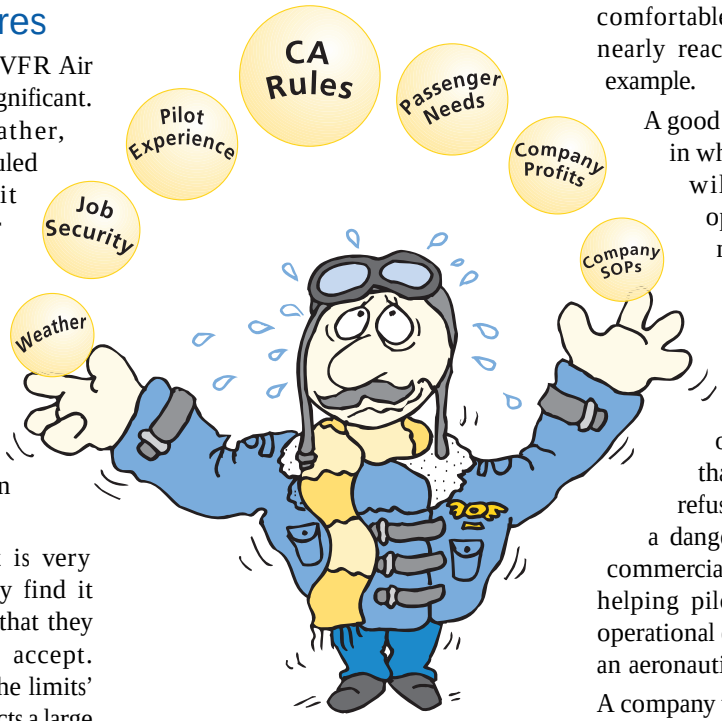
Emergency location transmitter signals led to the discovery of the wreckage later in the morning. The aircraft had struck a beech-forested slope in a steeply banked attitude at an elevation of about 3300 feet, some 200 feet below a saddle between two tussock-covered peaks. All on board were dead.

A cold unstable southwesterly flow, including vigorous cumulonimbus activity and snow showers, was affecting the area at the time of the accident.

The remoteness of the site, and the absence of witnesses or survivor information, precluded the finding of a conclusive reason for the accident. The available evidence suggested that, as a result of severely reduced visibility from heavy rain, snow, or low cloud, the pilot may have inadvertently approached the forested slope, attempted an evasive manoeuvre, and collided with trees.

Operational Pressures

The pressures associated with a VFR Air Transport Operation can be significant. The demands that the weather, passengers, maintaining a scheduled service, and company profit margins can place on an operator often make difficult the decision on whether to proceed with a particular flight. Pilots and managers frequently find themselves having to weigh up these variables against the risks associated with a particular flight – a decision that can become even more difficult once in the air.



Today's aviation environment is very competitive, and operators may find it difficult to turn down business that they feel their competitors might accept. But the reality is that 'pushing the limits' may result in an accident that exacts a large financial toll on a business (even to the extent of destroying it), and in the process it is likely to damage its reputation, possibly cost lives, and cause great emotional upset.

How best can we deal with these pressures?

Company Safety Culture

Safety starts with company safety culture. Management's commitment to safe operating procedures plays a major role in reducing pilot decision-making pressures. Companies that openly support their pilots with well documented procedures generally have a safer operation. A pilot must be confident that there will not be any repercussions for them if they decline a flight because they perceive it is unsafe. This becomes even more important if they are to feel comfortable about turning back after nearly reaching their destination, for example.

A good company safety culture is one in which pilots feel that their peers will value and respect the operational decisions that they make. Pilots should never feel reluctant to make what they know to be a safe decision for fear of embarrassment or loss of professional credibility amongst their peers. A goal-oriented company atmosphere that does not tolerate pilots who refuse to do or complete flights is a dangerous one. The reduction of commercial pressures is a key factor in helping pilots to focus on day-to-day operational decision-making purely from an aeronautical point of view.

A company with a proactive safety culture is also careful about the way it advertises its services to the public. Advertising slogans that promise to always get the passenger to their destination should be avoided. It is important that the staff handling customer inquires emphasise that all flights are subject to weather conditions being suitable on the day. If it transpires that the weather is marginal on the day, then the pilot concerned has an out, and the decision on whether to fly becomes

Continued over...

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VECTOR

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less pressurised. If the situation is carefully explained to them, most customers will accept that a flight is not possible. It is also likely that they will bring their business back at a later date.

VFR Meteorological Minima

Rule 91.301 *VFR Meteorological Minima* prescribes the minimum standard for all VFR operations (refer to the Civil Aviation Rule Part that is applicable to your type of operation for relevant air transport meteorological minimums).

Many commercial operators, however, set standards that are greater than these legal minimums. These standards should be outlined in the company's Operations Manual and should be known to all pilots. It is important to adhere strictly to these, and to resist the temptation to fly when the conditions are marginal.

If you are a relatively new or inexperienced pilot, who does not feel comfortable with your company's meteorological minimums (although most companies usually set higher operational minimums for new pilots), then set your own. Your company should respect you taking such a safe approach until you gain more familiarity with the operation. Personal minimums should, however, be reviewed from time to time as more experience is gained. This will ensure that a realistic balance is struck between a safe operation and an economic one.

Pilot Preparation

Rule 91.217 *Preflight actions* requires that a pilot must obtain, and become familiar with, all information that is relevant to the route to be flown before the flight is commenced.

Rule 91.221 *Flying equipment and operating information* requires all pilots to carry a set of up-to-date maps and a current *Visual Flight Guide* (note that air transport operations require additional documents to be carried – check what is applicable to your type of operation). A copy of the area weather, a flight-log card, and a cellular telephone will aid in-flight decision-making, particularly if weather conditions deteriorate. Even if the route chosen is very familiar, reference to this information may still be necessary.

A reduction in visibility while en route over high ground, for example, may necessitate a safer alternative route. Fuel remaining, elapsed flight time, civil evening twilight (CET), forecast weather conditions, and a map of the area then become essential pieces of decision-making information that should be to hand in the cockpit.

Having a number of pre-planned alternative routes in mind before a flight is commenced will further reduce pilot workload if a diversion is necessary. Pre-planning also helps to make the decision to divert early a safer and more viable one – especially when the options may not be straightforward at the time.

Being familiar with the FISCOM chart in the *Visual Flight Guide* and the local cellular coverage area is important too. Ensuring that you have advised Flight Information about your intentions to divert (or decision to return to the departure aerodrome), before going out of RTF or cellphone coverage, is critical for search and rescue reasons. It may also be your last chance to obtain the most up-to-date weather information and to notify your company base of your intentions. Note that carrying a cellphone also gives you the flexibility to discuss the conditions of the day with other pilots while on the ground at an airstrip that has no landline telephone.

Decision Factors

The decision not to proceed with a flight because of marginal weather preferably should be made on the ground, not after becoming airborne.

Some operators have been known to employ the 'suck it and see' approach when it comes to deciding if they can get to a particular destination. The further you progress into a flight, the greater become the psychological pressures to get to the destination. By setting off in marginal conditions that are likely to necessitate a

return, not only have you cost your company money, but also you have wasted your passengers' time.

Your credibility as a professional pilot can also be a factor that influences the decision-making process in such a situation. "What will the others think of me when I arrive back at the aerodrome after having got within several miles of the destination?" is an example of such peer pressure.

Too often, our better judgement is clouded by how we think others will view our decisions, and the fact that we are reluctant to inconvenience others. This pattern of thought makes it increasingly difficult to turn back or divert, and the temptation to push the boundaries just that little bit further to get to the destination can become even greater.

If you do find yourself in a situation where the weather has deteriorated, then make an early decision to turn back or divert. Usually your instincts will be correct. Don't fall into the trap of pushing on because you know a particular route well – the risks of becoming spatially disorientated are too great. Even the most prominent geographical features can look quite different in poor visibility – and when viewed from a lower level. Do not let passengers pressure you into continuing. You must assert your authority as pilot in command and explain the situation in no uncertain terms if they become insistent. Dealing with a disgruntled passenger is far easier than dealing with angry relatives after an accident. In most cases, passengers will respect your decision to turn back if you explain that the weather conditions have deteriorated and that you feel it is unsafe to continue.

Lost Procedure

If you do become situationally unaware, the first thing that you should do is admit to yourself that you are **lost**. Slow the aircraft down into the bad visibility configuration to give yourself more time to determine your position. Orbit overhead, or near, a prominent feature while using an area map to determine your location relative to your last known position. Make a radio call to let Flight Information, or other aircraft, know about your predicament. Drawing a 'circle of uncertainty' on your map is an effective method of narrowing down your location. Do not proceed in the hope that you will recognise a geographical feature – it will only take you further from your last known position.

Summary

Company safety culture is at the root of commercial aviation safety. A safe operation is one that allows its pilots to make decisions that are almost totally free from commercial pressure. The reduction of these pressures is a key factor in safe operational decision-making.

Where possible, make the decision about whether to proceed with a particular flight while still on the ground – not in the air. If conditions do change while en route, it is imperative that an early decision is made to turn back or divert. The temptation to continue because the route is familiar should be resisted, so too should the pressures that passengers may exert.

At the end of the day, the lost revenue through not making a flight or having to divert somewhere is a very small price to pay when you consider the costs of having an accident. When the conditions ahead are looking doubtful, it is worth saying to yourself, "**Pressing on is not worth the risk!**" ■

Aviation Safety Coordinator Courses

Attention Chief Executives!

Two Aviation Safety Coordinator training courses originally planned for late 1998 have been rescheduled in March 1999. These two-day courses will be held in Christchurch on 18–19 March and Auckland on 25–26 March.

An Aviation Safety Coordinator runs the safety programme in an organisation. Does your organisation have a properly administered and active safety programme?

If you are involved in commuter services, general aviation scenic operations, flight training, or sport aviation, this course is relevant for your organisation.

For further information and enrolment forms contact:

Rose Wood,
Publications Assistant,
Civil Aviation Authority,
PO Box 31-441, Lower Hutt.
e-mail woodr@caa.govt.nz

Apply now for an enrolment form!

What Is an Aviation Safety Programme?

An aviation safety programme is a formalised and documented plan that focuses on creating safety awareness and reducing accidents. It achieves this through two primary functions, risk management and safety awareness.

The safety programme includes all activities carried out within an organisation in order to maintain and promote safe practices. Such activities will usually include a hazard identification system, an occurrence reporting system, and safety surveys. Awareness will be raised by seminars, videos, magazines, meetings, posters, etc. A good safety programme will stimulate good communication.

A safety programme is a very important part of sound professional work practices. Safety should be very much a part of all aspects of your organisation's activities.

A Safety Coordinator can advise and make recommendations – the authority and instructions for implementation must come from a management level. The success or failure of any aviation safety programme rests at that level.

The first step must be commitment by the top management to a safety programme.

The CAA can provide formal training for your Aviation Safety Coordinator.

Why Have a Safety Programme?

The short answer is, "If you think safety is expensive, try having an accident!"

You may be insured for direct costs, but the indirect costs of an accident are many times greater (latest figures suggest 4:1). A safe operation could be critical to staying in business.

The benefits are many and include a safer operating environment for employees and passengers, a more cost-efficient operation, and a positive image leading to public confidence and business opportunities.

What is It?

A technical log records information on the maintenance status of an aircraft and the progressive usage of that aircraft. It also allows for the recording of non-routine maintenance should it arise. Civil Aviation rule 91.111 *Documents to be carried* requires each operator to provide a technical log that must be carried in the aircraft.

The technical log is designed to provide the pilot in command with information on the maintenance status of an aircraft. Before operating the aircraft, the pilot must ensure that its maintenance schedule is up to date and that there are no outstanding defects.

How is it Used?

The accompanying yellow text boxes provide a brief explanation of what information is required in each field of the "Aircraft Technical Log" (form CA006) and what that information is used for. (Note: Self-explanatory fields have not been covered by these yellow information boxes.)

Alternative Formats

Although the CAA makes the CA006 form readily available, the format of the technical log is up to the operator. Any format that is chosen must provide for the recording of the information categories that have been mentioned above. Operators should ensure that the chosen format allows this information to be recorded accurately and in a readily accessible fashion that can be stored securely. An aircraft's technical information may also be stored on a computerised system, provided that it is accessible to any pilot who wishes to fly that aircraft.

Technical Log Life

The maximum time that an aircraft technical log can remain in use is for 100 hours time in service, for 12 months, or until any section of the log become full – whichever occurs first.

Retention of Technical Logs

Since the technical log is an extension of the aircraft logbook, it must be retained in accordance with rule 91.631 *Retention of records*. Technical logs that have been filled should be kept securely until the next routine inspection. The information can then be transferred into the aircraft logbook.

Summary

The aircraft technical log should always be checked as part of the pre-flight inspection. As pilot in command, it is your responsibility to ensure that all routine maintenance is up to date and that there are no outstanding defects on the aircraft before it is flown. Any discrepancies in the technical log should be referred to the aircraft operator. If you find a defect, note it in the "Maintenance Arising" column and notify the operator as soon as possible – your actions should prevent the next pilot from flying a defective aircraft. ■

Section 1 - Information and Aircraft Maintenance Status

A. Aircraft type and operator details.

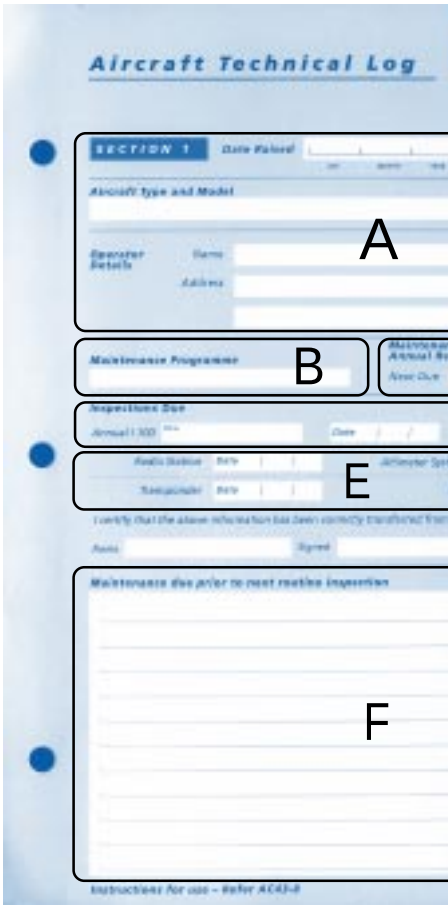
B. Specifies the type of maintenance programme to which the aircraft is maintained, eg, the Approved Manufacturer's Maintenance Programme.

C. Specifies when the next Annual Review of Airworthiness (ARA) is due. Air transport operators may elect to use the Maintenance Review process that is included in their maintenance manuals.

D. Identifies the type and date of the next scheduled inspection. The next routine inspection is determined either by the date specified, or the total airframe hours – whichever occurs first.

E. Before the aircraft can be operated, all the "Inspections Due" boxes must display a valid date.

F. Specifies maintenance due before the next routine inspection (such as a 50-hour oil and filter change).



Section 3 - Maintenance Arising

I. If a defect is discovered, it must be described concisely, dated, initialled, and referred to a LAME by the person concerned.

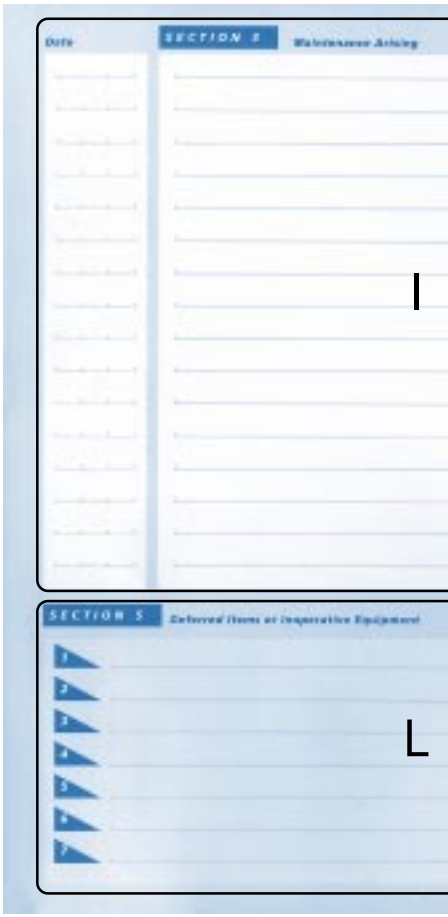
Section 5 - Deferred Items or Inoperative Equipment

L. A description of deferred items and operational limitations must be entered here. Deferred cockpit lightning maintenance, for example, would have the comment "No night operations" after it.

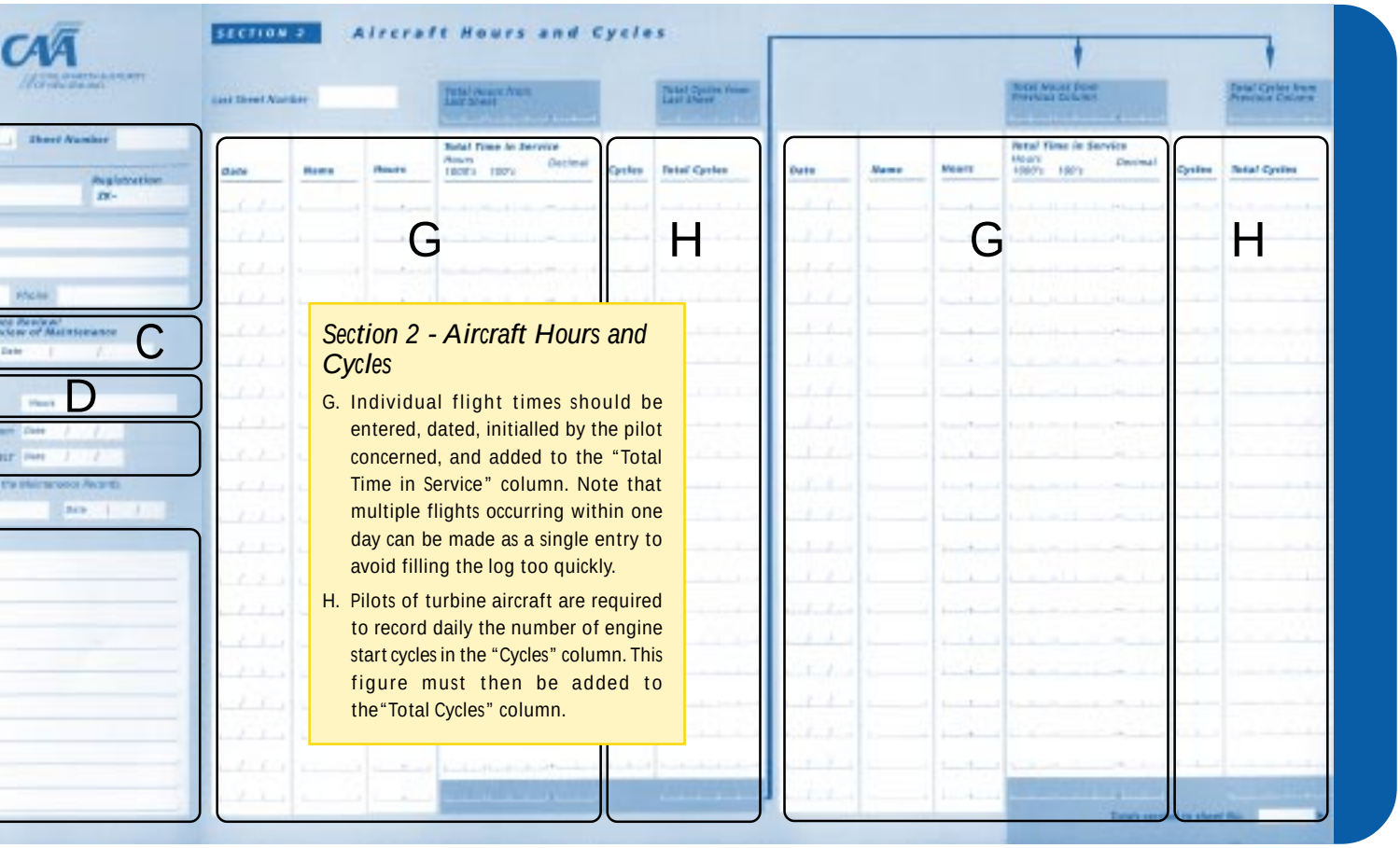
M. A description of the maintenance action taken to rectify the deferred item must be noted here.

N. Once a LAME has signed the deferred defect off at the next routine inspection, the operational limitation will no longer apply.

See Advisory Circular AC91-6 *Technical Log* if further details are required.



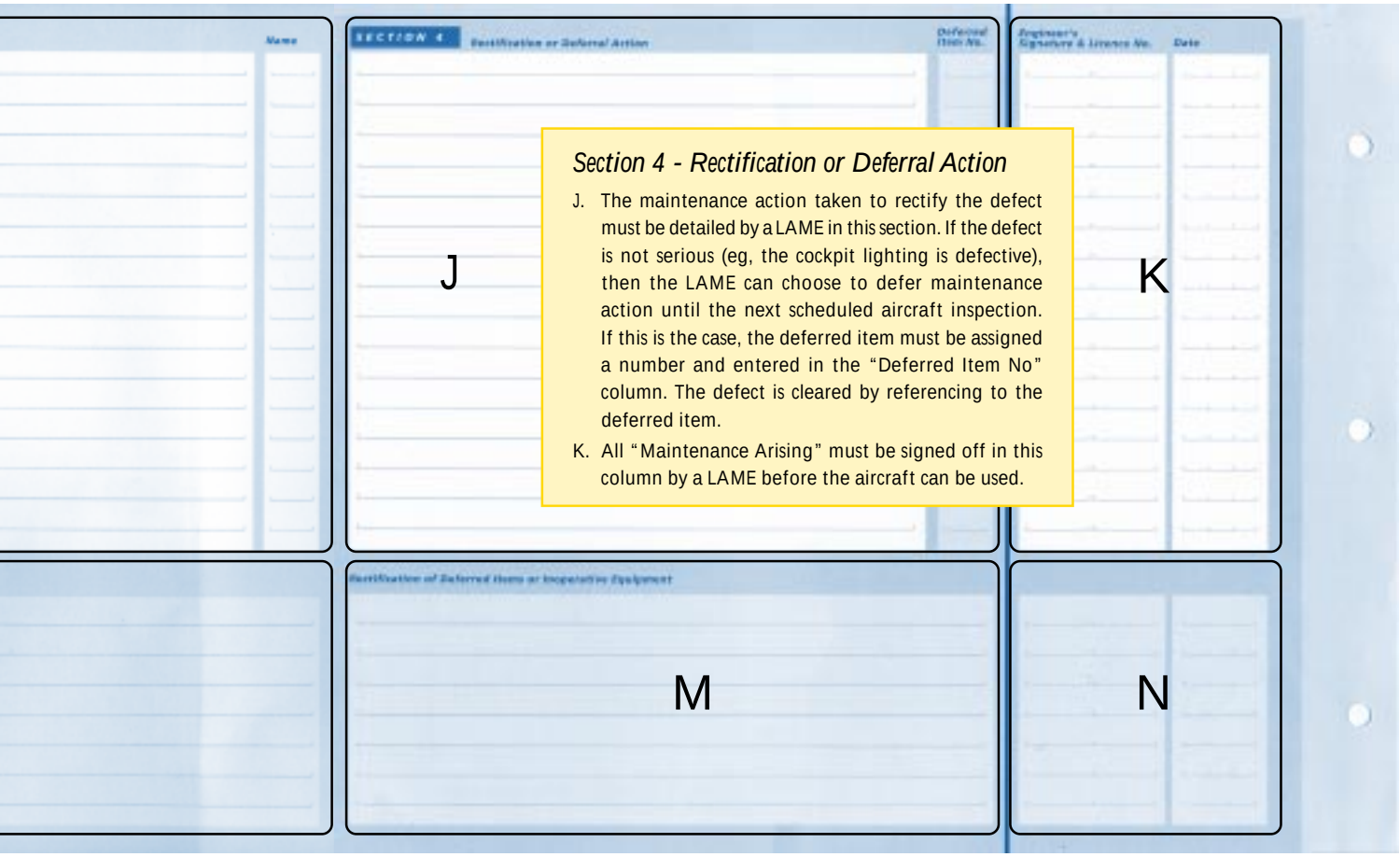
Technical Log



Section 2 - Aircraft Hours and Cycles

G. Individual flight times should be entered, dated, initialled by the pilot concerned, and added to the "Total Time in Service" column. Note that multiple flights occurring within one day can be made as a single entry to avoid filling the log too quickly.

H. Pilots of turbine aircraft are required to record daily the number of engine start cycles in the "Cycles" column. This figure must then be added to the "Total Cycles" column.



Section 4 - Rectification or Deferral Action

J. The maintenance action taken to rectify the defect must be detailed by a LAME in this section. If the defect is not serious (eg, the cockpit lighting is defective), then the LAME can choose to defer maintenance action until the next scheduled aircraft inspection. If this is the case, the deferred item must be assigned a number and entered in the "Deferred Item No" column. The defect is cleared by referencing to the deferred item.

K. All "Maintenance Arising" must be signed off in this column by a LAME before the aircraft can be used.

Itinerant Pilot Aerodrome Procedures

Photo courtesy of Wellington International Airport Limited (WIAL).

Vector has recently received reports from Wellington International Airport Limited (WIAL) that itinerant pilots are arriving during peak hours with little, or no, knowledge of arrival procedures and are causing a disruption to scheduled commercial traffic. WIAL has also reported that a lack of itinerant pilot knowledge of ground movement procedures continues to be a problem at Wellington and ties up a ground controller's time when taxi directions are required.

Wellington is not the only place where itinerant aircraft can be a problem though. Many busy aerodromes around the country also have specific arrival, departure, and ground movement procedures which should be studied carefully before flying into or out of these aerodromes.

Arrival Procedures

If you are planning a flight to an aerodrome with which you are not familiar, then study the aerodrome arrival procedures in the *Visual Flight Guide*. The applicable VTC must also be studied so that the position of reporting points, victor/kopter lanes, sectors, TMA limits, and control zone boundaries become more familiar. This not only makes the aerodrome controller's job far easier, but also it reduces your workload in the latter stages of the flight.

Planning an arrival time that avoids peak-hour traffic movements at a major aerodrome such as Wellington, Christchurch, and Auckland certainly helps to reduce everyone's stress levels. Peak hours for these aerodromes are considered to be between 7:30 and 9:30 in the morning and 4:30 and 7:00 in the evening. If you turn up during these hours you are likely to find yourself well down the priority list for an approach and may have to hold for a considerable period of time – maintaining the safe legal minimum fuel reserve could become a problem in such a situation.

It is sometimes advantageous to include on your flight plan that it is your "first time into Wellington" for example – this will alert the tower controller that you may require assistance with joining and taxi instructions.

Pilots, who wish to gain experience of a busy runway circuit for training purposes, are also requested to stay away during peak hours (see the OPS section of the *Visual Flight Guide* for further details). Air traffic service priorities during busy periods make circuit training impractical and will generally result in delays for other aircraft.

Traffic Flow

To facilitate smooth traffic flow, many large aerodromes require aircraft to maintain at least 90 knots while on final approach down to a height of 300 feet agl. This helps to ensure that there is less of a speed differential between you and faster aircraft behind you in the approach sequence. Your airspeed can then be reduced (if appropriate for your aircraft type) and the aircraft set up into the landing configuration, during the last 300 feet before touchdown.

It can sometimes assist traffic flow if you can land at a point on a long runway which will enable you to vacate promptly onto a taxiway. Air traffic control will normally advise you if this is desirable.

Departures

Being familiar with departure procedures, and planning a departure time that does not conflict with peak traffic movements, is equally important. It is useful to work out which type of departure you are likely to be given (depending on the runway in use and your flight plan details) and relate this information to your VTC so that reporting points and airspace requirements may be confirmed beforehand.

Wake Turbulence

Avoiding the wake turbulence of heavier aircraft while approaching or departing an aerodrome is extremely important. Any takeoff or approach that puts you below the flight path of a heavier aircraft that is ahead of you is hazardous. (Detailed information is available in the GAP booklet, *Wake Turbulence*.)

Ground Movements

Familiarity with ground movements procedures is also vital for helping to streamline aerodrome traffic movements. Knowing where you want to park on the aerodrome, being familiar with the taxiway system, and the local procedures outlined in the *Visual Flight Guide* is a help to the ground controller and ramp staff. Once on the ground, it is also useful to have the ground movement page(s) of your *Visual Flight Guide* open as a reference should you become unsure of where you are supposed to be taxiing to. This is particularly useful if you are given a complex taxi clearance. Never hesitate to ask the ground controller for assistance if you are unsure about a particular taxi route or instruction.

Understanding, and correctly following, the aerodrome markings is important too – particularly when manoeuvring around other aircraft parked on the freight apron where ramp staff are working and passengers are walking to and from their aircraft. Note that an explanation of the different types of aerodrome markings that you are likely to encounter can be found in "Aerodrome Markings – A Guide" which was published in *Vector* 1998, Issue 4.

Photo courtesy of *Airways Magazine*

Summary

If you are planning a flight to an unfamiliar aerodrome, ensure that you carefully study the aerodrome arrival, departure, and ground movement procedures in the *Visual Flight Guide* and the applicable VTC as part of your pre-flight preparation. Try to avoid arriving at, or departing from, aerodromes at times that conflict with periods of known heavy traffic. If you are ever unsure of your position, any arrival/departure procedure, or taxi instructions, then do not hesitate to ask the controller to clarify the situation.

Being well prepared not only helps to ensure a streamlined flow of aerodrome traffic, but also means a more relaxed flight for you, and generally it makes life easier for staff in the control tower and on the ground. ■

Safety Videos

Here is a consolidated list of safety videos made available by CAA. Note the instructions on how to borrow or purchase (ie, don't ring the editors.)

Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand

No	Title	Length	Year released
1	Weight and Balance	15 min	1987
2	ELBA	15 min	1987
3	Wirestrike	15 min	1987
5	The Human Factor	25 min	1989
6	Single-pilot IFR	15 min	1989
7	Radar and the Pilot	20 min	1990
8	Fuel in Focus	35 min	1991
9	Fuel Management	35 min	1991
10	Passenger Briefing	20 min	1992
11	Apron Safety	15 min	1992
12	Airspace and the VFR Pilot	45 min	1992
13	Mark 1 Eyeball	24 min	1993
14	Collision Avoidance	21 min	1993
15	On the Ground	21 min	1994
16	Mind that Prop/Rotor!	11 min	1994
17	Fit to Fly?	23 min	1995
18	Drugs and Flying	14 min	1995
19	Fatal Impressions	5 min	1995
20	Decisions, Decisions	30 min	1996
21	To the Rescue	24 min	1996
22	It's Alright if You Know What You Are Doing – Mountain Flying	32 min	1997
23	Momentum and Drag	21 min	1998
24	The Final Filter	16 min	1998

Miscellaneous individual titles

Working With Helicopters	8 min	1996*

*re-release date

Civil Aviation Authority, Australia

The Gentle Touch (Making a safe approach and landing)	27 min
Keep it Going (Airworthiness and maintenance)	24 min
Going Too Far (VFR weather decisions)	26 min
Going Ag – Grow (Agricultural operations)	19 min
Going Down (Handling emergencies)	30 min

The videos are VHS format and may be freely copied, but for best quality obtain professional copies from the master tapes — see "To Purchase" below.

The New Zealand tapes are produced on a limited budget, the first 11 titles using Low-band equipment. Quality improves in later titles. While the technical quality of the videos may not be up to the standard of commercial programmes, the value lies in the safety messages.

To Borrow: The New Zealand tapes may be borrowed, free of charge, as single copies or in multi-title volumes (Vol A contains titles 1 to 8, Vol B titles 9 to 14, Vol D titles 15 onwards. The Australian programmes are on a multi-title volume (Vol C). Contact CAA Librarian by fax (0–4–569 2024), phone (0–4–560 9400) or letter (Civil Aviation Authority, PO Box 31–441, Lower Hutt, Attention Librarian). **There is a high demand for the videos, so please return a borrowed video no later than one week after receiving it.**

To Purchase: Obtain direct from Dove Video, PO Box 7413, Sydenham, Christchurch. Enclose: **$10 for each title** ordered; plus **$10 for each tape** and box (maximum of 3 hours per tape); plus a **$5 handling fee** for each order. All prices include GST, packaging and domestic postage. Make cheques payable to "Dove Video".

Mount Cook and Westland

The following message is from the Mount Cook and Westland National Parks Resident Aircraft User Group. It relates to itinerant aircraft operations within the area – especially over the summer period.

To fly within the beautiful Mount Cook region is a treat for any pilot. To help you fly safely within this area, we ask that you observe the following:

- **Special procedures** – be familiar with the procedures outlined in the *VFG* for the Mount Cook area.
- **Local operators** – ask them to assist with weather reports and procedure briefings.
- **Collision avoidance** – ensure that the appropriate collision avoidance frequency is monitored at all times.
- **Keep position reports short and accurate** – including aircraft identification, position, altitude, and direction in your radio transmission is a must. Choose easily identifiable features to report over – incorrect position reports are very dangerous.
- **Greater safety margins** – flying 'high and wide' will provide greater separation from both terrain and traffic. It will also provide better photographic opportunities.

Pilots should refer to New Zealand Flight Safety FSM-95-1, June 1995 for further information on flying within the Mount Cook and Westland National Parks.

Field Safety Advisers

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e-mail: walkero@caa.govt.nz

Note that John Fogden's fax number has changed.

Going far?

...then file a Flight Plan

IT'S FREE AND IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!

Publications

0800 800 359 — Publishing Solutions, *for CA Rules and ACs, Part 39 Airworthiness Directives, CAA (saleable) Forms, and CAA Logbooks. Limited stocks of still-current AIC-AIRs, and AIC-GENs are also available. Also, paid subscriptions to Vector and Civil Aircraft Register.*

CAA Web Site, http://www.caa.govt.nz *for CA Rules, ACs and Airworthiness Directives.*

0800 500 045 — Aviation Publishing, *for AIP documents, including Planning Manual, IFG, VFG, SPFG, VTCs, and other maps and charts.*

Accident Notification

24-hour 7-day toll-free telephone

0508 ACCIDENT

(0508 222 433)

CAA Act requires notification "as soon as practicable".