

COVID 19 – Preparing to Return to Normal Flying Operations for General Aviation Private Pilots

CAP 1925

A large, abstract graphic composed of overlapping blue and purple shapes, resembling a stylized wing or a large letter 'C', occupies the bottom two-thirds of the page. It features a gradient from light blue to dark blue and purple.

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 4 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) 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'.

ALL GENERAL AVIATION PILOTS

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.

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 social distancing restrictions are lifted so 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.

GENERAL HEALTH, WELLBEING & PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Do you remain 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 you (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.

If you fly as a member of a Flying Club or School (ATO/DTO) remember the Head of Training and Business Owner/Accountable Manager need to carefully consider their instructors’, club members’ and students’ well-being and safety. People may have a concern about operating in a confined space like an aircraft cabin, when social distancing restrictions are lifted. Communication at a local level will be key to helping ensure everyone understands what local measures are in place and any new procedures to be followed.

PILOT LICENCE CONSIDERATIONS

The CAA has issued several exemptions as temporary alleviations to help support the aviation sector, including focus on supporting GA during the Covid 19 pandemic phase. The intent of these exemptions is to safely manage key licence, rating and medical expiry dates and help make a safe and smooth return to flying operations easier. The CAA has also published some easy reference exemption guides for GA in CAPs 1913 and 1917. If you were able to take advantage of the exemption published, thereby extending the validity of any class and instrument privileges until 22 November 2020, we still encourage you to complete appropriate refresher training or a club check out with a suitable Instructor prior to flying solo again once government guidance allows this.

If you were unable to take advantage of the exemptions as your class or instrument privileges had already expired before the Covid 19 exemptions became available, you will have to renew by Proficiency Check once Government guidance permits this.

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.

Most Flying Clubs and Schools will operate a recency requirement scheme whereby pilots require a club check if they have not flown solo for a defined period. These are club requirements (not CAA), sometimes linked to Insurance, and it should be borne in mind that if the club is unable to conduct check flights they may be unable to allow you to fly solo.

MEDICAL FITNESS

Any pilot who has had a decrease in their medical fitness that might impair the safe operation of an aircraft must contact their Aeromedical Examiner (AME) or the CAA's Medical Department for advice before flying.

The CAA has published an exemption, which gives the option to extend the validity of your Medical Certificate. If you have not taken advantage of this exemption and your Medical Certificate has expired you will be required to renew this with your AME.

Where pilots were able to take advantage of this exemption, they should still consider arranging a medical examination with their AME as soon as possible or, if appropriate and applicable to the type of licence you hold (UK National only, not Part-FCL/ {EASA}), make a Pilot Medical Declaration instead. You must ensure you fully understand your medical status before undertaking a flight as pilot in command and when any temporary exemption alleviation expires.

There may be challenges in obtaining Medical Certificate appointments with AMEs in the coming months due to prioritisation of appointments to support commercial operations, essential services and reduced AME capacity so considering this as soon as possible may be helpful. If operating with a Part-FCL (EASA) licence, operating an EASA aircraft, you are reminded you will require a Medical Certificate and not a declaration after 8th November 2020.

YOUR AIRCRAFT

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 has 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 deferable ensure that they are documented correctly.

Flight Profiles & Flight Planning

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

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.

What types of flights are you considering? We would recommend that initial flights focus on circuits and local area general handling. This means you can get back up to speed in a controlled way in an environment you are familiar with. Also consider if you are comfortable with the wind and weather conditions. This especially applies to low hours pilots, low hours on new aircraft type or those with a new flying qualification. Best practice does not encourage having one short check out flight with an Instructor (once these flights are permitted), and then setting-off on a long cross-country flight to a new destination in marginal weather.

Have you checked all the current flight safety information such as:

1. Meteorological information, TAF and Actuals and Met Form 214/215.
2. NOTAMs airspace and frequency changes.
3. Flight plans, if applicable.
4. VFR Chart in date.

It is also worth considering having your completed flight planning and performance calculations cross-checked by a Flight Instructor or another competent pilot.

AERODROME / AIRFIELD CONSIDERATIONS

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.

At licensed aerodromes pilots should liaise with the aerodrome operator or Duty Manager to ensure that they are happy for flying operations to recommence.

At unlicensed aerodromes the pilot 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.

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