



IAOPA (Europe) e-newsletter



Welcome to the June 2010 enews of IAOPA Europe, which goes out to 23,000 aircraft owners and pilots in 27 countries across the continent

Volcano falls quiet

The Icelandic volcano known as 'E+15' is no longer emitting ash, but only after it has been quiet for three months will it be considered dormant. Aviation authorities across Europe have established new procedures to minimise disruption should the volcano erupt again, but there has been little solid advice for general aviation on the possible effects of ash on piston engines. Lars Hjelmberg of AOPA Sweden has provided an analysis which is helpful to GA pilots in deciding whether to fly.

A fuller text appears in the June issue of *General Aviation* magazine, available on the IAOPA Europe website www.iaopa.eu - look in the 'AOPA Working For You' section. His main points: Only ash or dust below 10 microns would reach Europe, and the atmosphere below 5,000 feet normally contains a large amount of material of this size, particularly in heavily industrialised areas. While silica dust could be transformed into a glaze inside turbine engines, piston engines were not hot enough for long enough to make the transformation. Engine oil filters would take care of much of the dust, and changing the oil more frequently would take care of the issue. The ash particles were too small to have an effect on pitot tubes, air sensing units or air gyros, nor would they have any abnormal effect on propellers, windshields or antennae. The low concentrations of sulphur dioxide in Europe would pose little risk to health.

In precipitation there was a greater risk, with moisture falling from high altitudes will collecting dust and dramatically increasing the concentration of dust at lower altitudes. Moisture and dust may form a 'clay' which may get trapped in air filters. Particles may also attach to spark plugs and cause them to malfunction. Lars concludes: "For low altitude daytime VMC flights in piston powered aircraft above the European mainland, about 1800 nautical miles away from Eyjafjallajokull, with no visible ash or dust clouds, no rain in a clear dry sky and no abnormal smell in the air, such flights should pose no other challenge than the challenge you have for any other flight. But the decision to go or not to go is as always up to the pilot in command."

Muffler replacement times?

The FAA has issued a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin recommending that aircraft mufflers be replaced after 1,000 hours to minimise the risk of carbon monoxide leaks into the cockpit. The recommendation - which is not mandatory - springs from a technical study which showed that in the majority of CO-related incidents, the muffler was the source, and in 92 percent of the incidents where the muffler was the source, the muffler itself had been in service for more than 1,000 hours. There are no figures on how many mufflers in Europe are over the 1,000-hour level, but the replacement cost is estimated at €4,500 per muffler, even if there were enough mufflers available. The recommendation caught European muffler makers like Liese and Gomolzig by surprise - they recommend that mufflers be replaced on condition, and that CO detectors be carried prominently in cockpits.



‘No threat to Trusts’ - FAA

The FAA has moved to reassure the owners of N-registered aircraft operating under US Trusts in Europe that it has no plans to move against the Trust system after a brief moratorium was imposed on new aircraft registrations. Officials in the FAA blamed “confusion” in the Administration’s Oklahoma City headquarters for the moratorium, which affected non-US citizen Trusts. FAA Chief Counsel David Grizzle says: “Please know that the FAA has not imposed any moratorium on the processing of any pending or future registrations involving Non Citizen Trusts. The FAA Aeronautical Center is continuing its past practice of issuing opinions covering Non-Citizen Trusts in accordance with its prior practice. We are not challenging the registration of aircraft currently registered under Non-Citizen Trusts. As a result of a number of recent cases, however, we are conducting a more comprehensive review of Non-Citizen Trusts to ensure compliance with existing law, and determine whether any improvement should be made. We do not contemplate any immediate changes to agency practice. Following our review, to the extent the agency proposes any change in interpretation, rule, or law, the agency would follow notice-and-comment procedures as appropriate.”

Fixed ELTs will not lie down

At the end of a twelve-year battle, Canada is to mandate the installation of fixed 406 mHz Emergency Locator Transmitters in all aircraft, including private planes. The Canadian Owners and Pilots Association COPA expects the deal to be sealed in the near future, and says it’s the end of the road for the common-sense campaign against them. Owners now face a multi-million dollar bill to equip with fixed ELTs.

COPA has been fighting the superficially attractive - to regulators - mandate since 1998, and thought it had won the argument when the Canadian government pulled back from announcing compulsory equipment in 2009. COPA’s reservation, shared by AOPAs around the world, is that fixed ELTs simply don’t work; in crashes they tend not to activate, or to be destroyed, or their signal is masked by terrain or by wreckage, and they are useless in an accident on water. Two examples (of many) were the Air France A340 which crashed at Toronto in 2005 - none of the six fixed ELTs on board worked - and of course, Steve Fossett, who despite his fixed ELT was not found for a year. The fixed, impact-activated ELT has been described as the most useless piece of excess weight an aircraft could carry. The Personal Locator Beacon, which stays with the pilot and passenger rather than the remains of the aircraft, is infinitely preferable, and AOPA believes all pilots should carry the best PLB they can afford, whether or not an aircraft has a fixed ELT.

The question now is whether this Canadian mandate will spread. It already encompasses American aircraft which want to fly in Canada, despite there being no requirement for a fixed ELT at home. IAOPA continues to work at ICAO to make sure the real situation is known to regulators around the world.

Safety risk of blame culture

IAOPA is opposing a proposed EU regulation on aviation accident investigation that would grant judicial investigators access to flight recorders and other safety information. In fact, the EU intends that a judicial investigation will take precedence over a safety investigation, elevating the prosecution of suspects above the promotion of safety. IAOPA has joined 13 aviation organisations in Europe to oppose the plans, which would seriously jeopardise the ability of accident investigators to obtain the information necessary to establish what factors contributed to an accident and to take steps to prevent its recurrence. IAOPA’s Senior Vice President Martin Robinson says: “We don’t want to see a pilot, engineer, controller or anyone else being interviewed by accident investigators with his lawyer at his shoulder

telling him not to answer a question because of the risk of self-incrimination. That is not the way to bring out safety issues and prevent future accidents. Several European countries already operate this 'blame culture' approach where the most important issue is finding a scapegoat, and it's no coincidence that they tend to have the worst safety records."

IAOPA is calling on the European Parliament, Council and Commission to revise the proposals to limit the use of safety information in judicial proceedings only to cases where the accident investigation finds that willful or illegal actions were a factor in an accident.

Change of heart on SERA?

Several years of negotiation on future rules for European airspace seems to have been undermined by a decision to scrap plans for a uniform 'toolbox' of applications which would have allowed states some latitude in applying airspace classifications. Talks on SERA, the Single European Sky Rules of the Air, were thought to have produced a consensus on how to proceed towards an airspace system based on the seven ICAO classifications, but with enough flexibility to cater for every state's way of doing things. State regulators, however, are saying that the whole thing is back in the melting pot, with no reason given.

Under the Single European Sky framework regulations the EC proposed that states should comply with ICAO airspace classifications, but Eurocontrol surveys showed there were 20 different applications of the seven classifications across the continent. The ultimate objective in Europe is that somewhere between 2015 and 2020 we should have simplified airspace to the point where it can be described as 'known with intent,' 'known with unknown intent' and 'uncontrolled'. The goal is to allow commercial aircraft to take the shortest possible route to a destination. This 'free routing' system calls for a new level of flexibility and means that 'known' traffic can enter a controller's area without its precise intent - that is, where it will exit - being known. The debate on classification has been difficult, with 27 states each having their preferences, and it was agreed that a 'toolbox' of variations could be adopted to cater for them as long as each tool was applied in the same way so that a pilot knew what was expected. The EC seems now to have abandoned this toolbox, although there's no information on exactly why. Certainly a lot of states were saying that they, and not the EC, were the signatories to the Chicago Convention and therefore had sovereignty over their own airspace.

AOPA Ireland up and running

Newly re-established AOPA Ireland, launched following the visit of IAOPA Senior Vice President Martin Robinson to Ireland in August 2009, is now very active, recognised by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) as an official representative body for GA. The Association was launched by pilot Jim Breslin offering free membership in order to get established, and will be holding its first Annual General Meeting in Athlone in August to decide on membership dues. Jim Breslin says: "We took over a great name and representative body, AOPA Ireland, and continue to provide information and representation, and with the assistance of AOPA UK we have provided members with the UK magazine General Aviation. Alas, the free membership had to come to an end sometime, and that time is now. We will be electing a committee to run the show. I'm glad I took on the challenge - the experience has been very testing, but so interesting that it made it all worthwhile."

World Assembly - the final countdown

The 2010 IAOPA World Assembly in Tel Aviv begins on June 6th. Yigal Merav of AOPA Israel reports that all is set and ready; the Israelis expect some 80 delegates from around the world including the USA, Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, Canada, Germany, the UK, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Sweden, Botswana, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Russia, and some 15 GA aircraft are flying in.



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