ARE YOU A 'CROWING ROOSTER'?

And how's the rest of your radio technique?

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When he was in Rarotonga, the head of training at Christchurch Aero Club, Ross Sparks, would be woken by the 3 am rooster.

"A second rooster, in the next village, would then start up. Then a third in the village after that, and so on."

He likens the radio practice of some pilots to those roosters.

"A pilot flying along the Canterbury coast might make a – totally unnecessary – position report, then another pilot in the foothills hears that and pushes their transmit button as well, without really thinking about what they're doing.

"Other pilots, hearing those two calls, also then rush to give a position report – even though all these pilots could be 50 km from each other."

Ross says this is a problem because it clutters the frequency with unnecessary chatter.

"It could impede another aircraft from making an important, or even urgent, transmission. Excessive and unneccesary calling confuses rather than enhances situational awareness.

"It can also pressure other operators to turn down their radio volume to concentrate on their work. Imagine an instructor trying to teach their student, or an ag operator, or parachute pilot listening to you make a call as you pass every creek or river while tracking along the coast.

"Use your common sense about whether you really need to make that radio call.

"A knee-jerk call, without giving thought as to whether you're in danger of conflict, is just poor radio practice."

// Use your common sense about whether you really need to make that radio call. //

So when should you push 'transmit'?

Ross and CAA Aviation Safety Advisor Carlton Campbell, offer some straight-forward tips on using the radio effectively.

The four Cs

To reduce 'noise', and to ensure others understand you when you do need to make a radio call, ensure that it's clear, concise, correct and consistent. Read the *Plane talking* GAP booklet for guidance.

This is particularly important in situations where there are nearby students who have English as their second language; or low experience pilots; or poor radio reception due to terrain shielding; or poor quality of equipment; or open cockpit aircraft.

Remember there may be aircraft near you operating NORDO (no radio).

Good lookout is essential to maintain situational awareness and is the primary tool in avoiding collision. Just because you've made a radio call doesn't mean you've met your obligation to safety. Only an effective lookout will ultimately ensure a collision is avoided.

Do not rely on tablet information. It can be incorrect because the information must travel via a ground station before being displayed. This can result in up to three minutes delay in the information reaching the screen. Remember that aircraft not equipped with ADS-B will not show on the screen.

The radio is no replacement for a good lookout. But it can help you look in the right place.

Joining

When joining at an uncontrolled aerodrome in a standard situation, call 10 NM out, overhead the field, and downwind to land.

Any extra calls need to be made only if procedurally required to avoid conflict, or if stated to do so on the *AIPNZ* visual departure/arrival, or aerodrome, chart.

In the circuit

Standard calls in the circuit are as follows: lining up and rolling; downwind; other times as specified on the aerodrome plate; and to avoid conflict. »

» Always aviate first. If the radio is busy and you haven't got your call in on downwind, fly the aircraft. Complete your set-up, turn base and make your call on base if necessary.

What is not required is a blind call asking, "Is there any traffic in the aerodrome traffic circuit?"

This may prompt an aircraft not relevant to your movements to call. Both calls then contribute to clutter. Other aircraft at the airfield may be NORDO, or possibly in an emergency situation but unable to make a radio call.

Lookout is the key to providing a safe separation in all these situations.

In transit lanes

Make a call before you enter the transit lane, and as required to avoid conflict.

If another aircraft enters the same transit lane from the opposite end at the same altitude as you, be proactive and change altitude for vertical separation. As you make that change, it's important you make a call stating what altitude you are now going to fly at.

A call to state you have that aircraft "in sight" and you are in their "2 o'clock one mile at 2000" will help the other aircraft sight you.

If you have one radio, using the adjacent airspace frequency would be prudent. If you have two boxes, it's advisable to monitor the tower frequency on the second for situational awareness of traffic entering the transit lane.

In MBZs

Make a call on entering any mandatory broadcast zone, with intentions and altitude. Then call as depicted on the chart, usually every 10 to 15 mins.

Obviously, make extra calls to avoid conflict, but generally maintain a listening watch to help keep the radio clear for any necessary calls.

In CFZs

They're not MBZs. Common frequency zones are simply areas where everyone with a radio should be operating on the same frequency.

There's no specified periodic number of radio calls to be made, so just call as required, at least when entering and departing the CFZ.

As an example, if you're tracking from point A to point B through a CFZ, you would make a call overhead point A "tracking to point B", and then again once you're overhead point B.

You would also make one when someone enters the same CFZ and could conflict with your path.

Mountainous terrain

When flying in mountainous terrain, be aware that other aircraft may not hear your call, so good lookout is vital.

Contacting a control or flight information service may be hard in mountainous terrain, so if you're getting close to your SARTIME, you may want to update it before you enter the mountains.

VRPs

No *Vector* reader should need to be told that visual reporting points denoted on the VNCs are prominent geographic features to assist traffic with unambiguous locations to report at.

VRPs become increasingly important in areas of high traffic, and special operations such as parachuting.

If you don't report at these points, other aircraft may not identify a potential threat to them and their activity. If tracking in a constant direction, and no terrain shielding is likely, it is not necessary to report at each and every VRP.

Finally, 119.1

119.1 MHz is the unattended aerodrome frequency for aerodromes without a dedicated frequency. End of.

Queries or comments?
Email **carlton.campbell@caa.govt.nz**

To request copies of the updated *How to be a pilot* GAP booklet and the updated *Standard overhead join and Standard overhead join (right-hand pattern)* posters, go to **aviation.govt.nz/education** > **order publications**.