

Dear Sir/Madam,

As you know, NATS has been working hard over the last few years with the General Aviation Community to jointly address the risk of aircraft infringing controlled airspace without a clearance. As General Manager of Swanwick (London) Air Traffic Control Centre, I am becoming increasingly concerned about this safety risk. Recently there was a serious airspace incursion in the Heathrow Control Zone. A light aircraft entered the climb out area of the zone and as a result, there were several losses of separation with aircraft departing Heathrow. The problem was further compounded by the fact that aircraft was not transponding and so several safety nets (a system that helps detection of transponding infringers, and that of TCAS), were both rendered ineffective).

It is the time of the year when we see an increase in the number of unauthorised penetrations of controlled airspace, as the weather improves and seasons change. Our investigations have shown that the majority of infringements are as a result of private pilots who become uncertain of their position.

NATS has spent considerable time and effort in trying to mitigate the severity of infringements. We have developed warning systems for controllers so that early action may be taken to reduce the risk to aircraft infringing controlled airspace, but all of our safety systems and those of commercial aircraft rely on transponders and Secondary Surveillance Radar (SSR).

A major cause for concern to us is that the number of non-squawking aircraft infringing CAS appears to be increasing and these events do bring a significant risk to the operation. Our investigations show the large majority of such infringements are locally based pilots who are familiar with the London area.

I am sure you share my concern around this risk and would want to work with me to help reduce the risk of an accident caused by an infringement. Because I am so concerned about the risk to the safety of aircraft operating under and in the London TMA this summer, I am requesting that your operation consider the following actions that I believe will reduce the risk of a serious incident:

- If your aircraft are equipped with transponders ensure that they are used on every flight, including mode C height information – even if you are not requiring a service from ATC.
- For all flights operating under the LTMA area, please contact Farnborough LARS for a service.
- Please remind all pilots of the requirements to conduct a thorough briefing before all flights. A lot of infringements are caused by pilots operating in their local area. When booking pilots out, you may wish to consider asking them about their pre flight planning. All

safe flights start with thorough pre-flight planning to take account of the boundaries of CAS.

- Even if a club aircraft is operating locally, pilots should be mindful of the risk of infringing controlled airspace and ensure they are aware of the lateral and vertical boundaries of controlled airspace, even when flying in an area that they consider to be familiar to them. Controlled airspace around London is complex and flying around it safely, requires significant extra attention to charts, to aircraft position and to navigation in general.
- Consider making your pilots aware of the service that is available to pilots unsure of their position from the Distress and diversion cell (that is based at Swanwick) on 121.5 . If they are in at all doubtful of their position, call 121.5 .
- NATS is producing a DVD presentation that is intended to raise awareness of the risks of infringements of controlled airspace, along with techniques by which infringements can be reduced. We envisage distributing the DVD to you in July 09 - Swanwick ATC Staff are keen to offer their services to present the video at your club - I would encourage you to contact NATS (names below) if you would like this service.
- Swanwick is very happy to host a liaison visit for your club to the centre and to meet with our controllers, flight information service officers and to visit the distress and diversion cell.

NATS is keen to work in partnership with airspace users to create a safe operating environment for all airspace users. If there is anything that you feel that we can do to help achieve this, please do not hesitate to contact myself or a member of my team. The contact details are as follows:

The "Team"

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Yours sincerely

Simon Hocquard  
General Manager  
Swanwick