Avoiding airspace infringements

Key tips and sources of information

UK Civil Aviation Authority

Apply Threat and Error Management (TEM) in your planning and flying. Identify the Threats such as airspace, weather and equipment. Consider the Errors you may make, such as in navigation. Address them early.

Do not get airborne without a plan. Study the airspace in advance in three-dimensions paying particular attention to vertical limits of controlled airspace. Within your plan remain 200' from the base of controlled airspace and/or 2nm from the edge. If you are inexperienced or training why not increase that buffer? Always have an alternative plan (Plan B).

Use a Frequency Monitoring Code (FMC) / Listening Squawk. If you do not want an air traffic service, rather than squawking 7000 use an FMC and listen out on the frequency.

Use a Moving Map. Ensure that the moving map is recently updated before you start planning. Plan your route carefully on the moving map, both horizontally and vertically, checking for vertical and lateral airspace, and, in planning to 'Take 2' (remaining 200' from the base of controlled airspace and/or and 2nm from edge of any airspace).

Ensure that you carry a backup, whether a current paper chart with the route drawn on, or a second moving map display.

In flight, remain on the magenta line at the planned altitude, have the moving map in your field of vision, showing airspace and with alerts enabled; don't cancel the alerts until you have mentally registered them and be aware of associated TEM.

Think, plan, avoid and enjoy your flight

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Carry a Pilot Log (PLOG). Print out a PLOG; include all radio frequencies including those for possible diversion aerodromes and any FMCs that may be applicable for both the flight and any diversion. Annotate the altitudes you plan to fly and where you plan to start your climb and descent.

Understand the role of distraction before and during flight and how it can lead to inadvertent infringement of controlled airspace. Pilots should consciously recognise distractions including those from passengers, unfamiliar equipment or its malfunction, aircraft problems or weather as well as personal problems or stress. Pilots should ensure they positively shift attention from them back to flying, operating and navigating the aircraft. If weather is becoming a factor, change your plans early and carefully.

Enjoy the flight by looking outside the cockpit with occasional confirmation checks on progress by viewing the moving map display. If it seems to be going wrong call D&D sooner rather than later on 121.500MHz or, if you are using an FMC, the unit you are listening to. If stress is increasing, move further from airspace, both vertically and horizontally.

Sources of information

- NATS Airspace User Portal https://aup.nats.aero/
- NATS AIS: Use tabs for AIP, NOTAM www.nats-uk.ead-it.com
- Met Office: www.metoffice.gov.uk/services/transport/aviation/regulated/aviation-briefing-service-guidance
- The Skyway Code: Safety rules and advice www.caa.co.uk/skywaycode
- SKYWISE: Tailored notifications and alerts from the CAA skywise.caa.co.uk

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