

ON THE FLIGHT LINE

As the Safety officer over the last few months I have been observing how we interact and where we can improve on being safe. For the most part members are courteous and mindful of the rules but there are always ways to improve. Following are a few suggestions.

Situational awareness.

Before you step past the fence to power up your plane or heli you should take time to observe what is happening on the flight line. Is it crowded? What types of planes are flying? Are they doing 3D in the middle, racing in a circuit, doing touch and go's? What is the skill level of the pilots? Are they struggling and need some space or experienced pilots who you can count on to be consistent? What are the winds like? How will these affect your flying?

These and more, are factors you should take into account when you are about to fly. Maybe that you want to wait till some of the pilots finish.

These points should all be considerations when you are going out to fly. This is especially true on those days and times when it is crowded such as Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Calling it out (Communicate!)

When you are out on the flight line you should yell out your intentions and also acknowledge other people calling out. In the last month I have seen a number of close calls and hurt feelings that could have been avoided if pilots called it out so intentions were known. So what do you yell and when?

Taking off!

This should be called out prior to leaving the taxiway for the runway. You should check both ways and make sure no one else is about to land prior to calling out. Make sure you listen for others to acknowledge.

Landing!

When you are about to make your approach you need to warn others you are about to land. Make sure you listen for others to acknowledge. Make sure you leave yourself enough battery or gas to go around in case there is a conflict or your approach does not go as you expected. It happens to us all.

Touch and Go!

This is the same as Landing! but tells others you will be clear of the runway and probably not be taxiing.

Deadstick!

This is a mayday. Use it when you have no power or your plane is malfunctioning and you need to land IMMEDIATELY. All others should acknowledge the Mayday and stay clear of the approaches and runway till the plane is on the ground and cleared off the runway

On the Runway (or field)!

If you need to cross onto the runway, cross it, or go beyond the near edge of the runway you need to yell this and make sure all the pilots hear you. It is up to you to make sure all the people hear you so you are not put in danger by a plane or heli. So make sure you say it loud and people know!

Clear!

This should be used when you get off the runway or transition from the runway to the taxi path so pilots know your plane and/or you are no longer in the way. Say it loud.

OK!

Last but not least is the acknowledgment that you heard the person. With the noise from planes, wind and other distractions a call out can be missed. A well sounded "OK!" helps the person know they were heard.

Spotting!

When there are 4 planes in the sky and one is yours it is not always easy to know where the other three are. The ideal situation is to have a spotter with you. Someone standing next to you that can watch the overall picture and inform the pilot of any potential situations. Some folks will say "I don't need that..." but it can be very useful. And what better way to share the experience? Often having another pilot next to you can be very helpful. They may note details you have not, see that piece fly off your plane or they may have experience that can be shared with you while you fly. If the person is newer what better way to impart knowledge and get to know another pilot. Don't be shy, offer to spot for someone if they are going out on the line and is busy. What is the worst they can say? "No thanks". I would never turn down a spotter that offered up their time and eyes.

So in summary three items to consider.

- 1- The situation on the field before you even step out on it.
- 2- Communicate loudly for safety.
- 3- Be a spotter or ask someone to spot for you.

And one last reminder

Planes should not fly over the pilots. They should be over the runway or beyond it. This seems to be ignored a little lately. If the cross wind is causing you to struggle and come to close, be safe and go around. ***Don't fly on this side of the runway please!***

Thanks and happy flying

Bill Cessna, SPARKS Safety Officer 3/31/2013