

## An Article On Spring Conditions Originally Posted On Facebook By Mark Bosher

Mark is a very experienced pilot, instructor, and the owner of Peak Airsports (<http://peakairsports.com/>) and has kindly given permission to place this article on the 50K or Bust! web site. His perceptive article explains some of the problems of spring conditions far better than I can and is applicable to pilots of all levels of experience.

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### Safety is no accident, a message to all pilots:

Spring is around the corner and already it is starting to get thermic on our sites and soon it will be that time of the year that can be the MOST DEMANDING flying conditions by far. Not just because we are going to get strong thermals, but also because many pilots come out from the winter weather break and haven't flown for many months.

For some of us who are lucky and can stay current (almost throughout the year) we want the spring thermals to take us up and away above others and maybe over the back of the hill on our first XC's flights?

For most though, they are still trying to catch up on airtime and skills lost over the past few months.

This means we have very busy sites at times, with all sorts of pilots in the air, all at once. From low airtime, low experience or newly qualified pilots, to some of the most experienced and best pilots in the country.

Please try and keep safe and show good airmanship and remember when others are thermaling up wind of you, it is not good practice or safe to fly / approach directly from behind the upwind pilot, why???

- . They cannot see you all of the time while they thermal and 360.
- . Both your closing speeds will be high and difficult to judge on both parts.
- . If you collide the rotation will probably course both wings to tangle and if at low level the outcome isn't going to be good.

What's the right technique or best practice to keep everyone as safe as possible?

- . Do not do 360 turns (thermaling) low down on the ridge unless you are

experienced in doing so (as you may get a collapse and hit the hill hard).

. Try not to thermal while others are soaring low on the ridge (unless you can do so without scattering the whole ridge of pilots).

. Are you sure you can fit in easily with the other thermaling pilot?

. Have they seen you?

. Are they looking around also?

. If happy with above, try and approach the thermaling pilot off to one side of his downwind track, this gives you time to see him and judge what angle / speed you need to join the thermal with the other pilot (in the same direction).

Although don't get me wrong, I think there's one born every minute and some pilots seem to think it's everyone else who gets in their way!!?

Pilots who fly with a disregard to others safety (and their own) are a danger to themselves, the club and fellow pilots and do need educating. All pilots should know what 'good airmanship' really means (on the ground, in the air and once they have landed). Careless airmanship and ignorance has and can cost lives.

No one wants to get injured or lose their life (or take the life of a fellow pilot) but we must make ourselves accountable for our actions and be pilots who can learn from others and our own experiences (and mistakes) and pass this on to the benefit of our fellow pilots and the sport.

Some members reading this will have seen, 'first hand' the effects of a serious accident. Believe me when I say, no words could describe or prepare you for what you see and what affect it has on you, during and after the event. One of the hardest things about these accidents and deaths (like most, if not all accidents) is they could have been totally avoided. In the end, it was down to a moment of lapsed concentration and no luck (like most accidents).

Please remember, there is no 'new accidents' anymore, just the same one's done differently.

Also, once you have landed all pilots (HG or PG) need to gather up the wing and move (and leave clear) all and any landing field and go to the normal de-rigg areas (ask before you fly if you don't know where these are) or move to the side of the field. Do not de-rigg were you landed!

So what can be done to help the PSA be a safer club for all?

This has been asked many times before over the years and these are some of

my answers, but there are lots more.

- Safety is no accident
- Practice, practice, practice
- Be tolerant to less experienced pilots and give 'all pilots' room
- Monitor your flying and safety at all times
- Do not fly behind others directly or fly towards others directly, And especially if they are already thermaling or ridge soaring.
- A flight is not worth your life or someone else's!!!
- Be honest with yourself and be honest with others
- If you have made a mistake, register it, learn from it and move on
- Learn 'your skill level' and know where it is
- Don't fly outside your skill level
- Don't fly in conditions that will test your limits or your wings limits
- Enjoy others pilots company in the air (and on the ground)
- Don't be aggressive, it spoils your day and others
- Help others, but don't give advice if you're not sure yourself
- Don't be afraid to ask for advice or help
- Once landed, clear the landing field / area asap.

And the list goes on and on.....

My last thoughts are; I don't know everything and hope I never will (life would be so boring). But what I do know, I will gladly pass on to others. No one is immune to accidents (because we are all human). The difficult question is, when is the next accident going to happen (and will it be me, you or both)?

Fly safe, get high and have fun, that's what it's all about!

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