



IAOPA-Europe e-news, June 2009

Welcome to the e-news of IAOPA-Europe, which goes out to 23,000 aircraft owners and pilots in 27 countries across the continent

Mode-S: must have, but switched off

Pilots should be aware that despite the recent order to turn off Mode-S transponders in the Amsterdam area, it remains illegal to fly in Dutch airspace above 1200 feet and in TMZs without a Mode-S transponder, and if you don't tick the correct box on your flight plan, it will not be accepted.

Ary Stigter of AOPA-Netherlands has been heavily involved in moves to try to alleviate problems caused by Holland's demand that all aircraft should install and use Mode-S transponders. Holland has run well ahead of the rest of Europe in mandating Mode-S despite the many concerns raised by IAOPA, including the fact that GA Mode-S returns would blank out commercial aircraft returns in heavily-trafficked areas. The original demand was that all aircraft in Europe should be Mode-S equipped by 2007, but the lack of a low-power lightweight transponder made this impossible. The Dutch CAA, however, mandated that all new aircraft be equipped with Mode-S from 2007, including even non-powered aircraft. The fact that Mode-S transponders for these aircraft did not exist led Holland to adopt a gradual introduction scheme for gliders ending in 2010.

For years, transponders of any type have had to be switched off below the Schiphol TMA because they triggered TCAS alerts on approaching CAT aircraft at 2000 feet. A minimum vertical separation of 800 feet is needed to avoid false alerts, so when Mode-S was made mandatory, GA aircraft were ordered to fly below 1200 feet. The Mode-S requirement came into force on March 12, 2009 without a safety assessment and in the face of doubts expressed by ATC, who had proposed that software be

incorporated to filter out 7000 returns below 1500 feet. The Dutch CAA refused to allow this.

On the first day of clear VMC after March 12, Schiphol radar screens were cluttered by Mode-S returns to the point where CAT could not be seen, despite tags being reduced to the smallest print size. It was decided to close the VFR area below the SPL TMA except for some state and commercial operations. AOPA-Netherlands proposed a reversion to the previous system of switching off transponders, which has proved safe over the past 20 years. Initially the Dutch CAA opposed this, but on April 10th it agreed to reopen the airspace to VFR traffic with transponders switched off.

Ary Stigter says: "We expect a large number of protests addressed to the Minister of Transport from pilots who are affected by lack of harmonisation in EASA airspace. Lack of harmonisation will increase infringements. Safety was never not the issue for Mode-S transponders - easier identification of infringers was the driver for the Dutch CAA to force the introduction."

ELTs: don't need, must have

IAOPA is trying to find a way around a new anomaly which means that neither British nor Dutch GA aircraft need to carry fixed ELTs, except when flying into Dutch airspace. Both countries have granted exemptions from an ICAO recommendation that all aircraft carry ELTs, so pilots don't have to have them installed for flights at home, but the Dutch CAA says an aircraft crossing an FIR boundary from the UK into Holland is an international flight subject to ICAO rules, which require a fixed ELT. The situation came to light when a group of UK AOPA members asked IAOPA to clarify the situation because they intended to transit through Holland. The Dutch said they would make an exception for the group, but that no future concessions would be made. This could be nothing more than another laughable piece of legalistic nonsense but for the fact that in some circumstances, it might affect insurance claims. IAOPA says PLBs are far more effective and useful than ELTs, and that every pilot should have the best PLB he or she can afford.

Sardinia rescinds GA tax

Great news from AOPA-Italy's Massimo Levy – the special tax on general aviation landing in Sardinia has been cancelled! The new Governor of the region, elected in February with a huge majority, has maintained his promise and cancelled the so called 'luxury tax' on boats and private airplanes reaching the island. After the tax was introduced AOPA-Italy requested that GA avoid Sardinia, and many aviators and yachtsmen did so, costing the island dear. Massimo says: "We cannot say that this is a victory for AOPA, but certainly our campaign against the tax has helped to obtain this result."

Sardinia has four airports, Olbia, Cagliari, Alghero and Oristano All are open to GA, and all of them – exceptional for Italy – have avgas. Its beaches are among the prettiest of the Mediterranean and now, general aviation is again welcome. Massimo says that in particular, Olbia has one of the best organisations for GA traffic.

Emissions trading traps private operators

The EU's new CO2 emissions trading scheme, which exempts small commercial operators of aircraft like the Beech King Air, will hit private owners of similar aircraft who are caught in its net. Aircraft over 5,700 kg will fall under an EU emissions trading scheme under EU Directive 2008/101/EU, but it exempts "aircraft below 5,700 kg MTOW and commercial operators producing less than the 243 flights every four months, or less than 10,000 tonnes of CO2 per year." These are classed as 'minimal emitters' who do not fall into the emissions trading net. Private operators of such aircraft would, however, be required to pay. Dr Michael Erb, managing director of AOPA-Germany, says: "This is clearly discrimination against non-commercial operators, because I can't imagine any justification for declaring non-commercial emissions worse than commercial emissions." Apart from the fees, setting up a monitoring system is a costly and bureaucratic process which has been designed for airlines. Dr Erb and Jacob Pedersen of AOPA-Denmark are working to clarify the situation and to remove the anomaly.

Italy listens to AOPA

Armed with the recent European Parliament resolution supporting GA, AOPA-Italy's new president Carlo Golda and former president Massimo Levy recently spent an hour in front of Italian MPs setting out the special problems of GA in Italy. The Chamber of Deputies is holding a program of hearings on the structure of the national airport network, and as part of that, AOPA Italy has been questioned by the Transport Commission. They told the Transport Commission that the Italian airport network is grossly inadequate for a country that is in the top eight of the world's economies. The Commission president Mario Valducci, who had received an letter of introduction from IAOPA general secretary John Sheehan, questioned the AOPA delegation in a manner which showed an unexpected interest in their presentation. Massimo says: "We were told the conclusion of the investigations will be made public at the end of July"

New problems crossing military CTRs in Italy

Massimo Levy reports what he calls "A sad and crazy story..." IFR aircraft using ATC usually pay Eurocontrol for services received, and Eurocontrol distributes the money among the states. In Italy, the money goes to ENAV, the Italian Air Traffic Control Corporation. But many airports are in the hands of the Italian Air Force and are available to civilian use without

problems or ATC charges. But the credit crunch has reduced the Italian Air Force's allocation from the Ministry of Finance, and the Air Force has asked to be paid for ATC services to civilians. It looks like the answer was negative, because from June 1st (barring a last-minute change) all civilian traffic to and from military airports will be reduced by 50%, both VFR and IFR. For example, no more than eight simultaneous VFR flights will be allowed in Garda CTR in the middle of Northern Italy. The Italian CAA has unhelpfully suggested banning all VFR to make room for more IFR, which is not an option. Military air traffic controllers in Italy are generally more accommodating than civilian ones, so Massimo says: "If you happen to be denied entry in a military CTR, do not argue with the controller – usually, he is your friend. Try to avoid the area."

Poland removes avgas licence

AOPA-Poland has won its long fight to reform the licensing system for the sale of aviation fuels, which now means that flying clubs and FTOs can sell avgas without going through an expensive, lengthy and bureaucratic process to obtain and renew government permission. The Polish Parliament has adopted changes of the Energy Law to liberalise the provision of avgas and other fuels.

NPPL in the CI

AOPA UK has held useful talks with aviation authorities in the Channel Islands with a view to allowing the National Private Pilots Licence to be used there. The NPPL, which is slightly less expensive than the JAR PPL to obtain but has more sensible medical requirements, was proposed and written by AOPA UK and introduced for use in the UK only, but the Channel Islands treasure their independence in many ways and have never allowed its use. Talks between Fergus Woods, who now runs aviation in the islands, Martin Robinson, senior vice president of IAOPA, and Charles Strasser, AOPA UK's Channel Islands chairman, have been described as "positive" and it is hoped the benefits of the NPPL can be extended to the islands soon. The NPPL is the model for the EASA LAPL.

Travelling man

IAOPA senior vice president Martin Robinson has been visiting European AOPAs with a view to fostering better understanding and closer co-operation between AOPAs, and helping to recruit new members. He has held talks with Czech AOPA at Letnany, Prague, during the recent Aero Expo, attended the AGM of AOPAs in Holland and Denmark, and has a series of meetings lined up across Europe.

AOPA Italy General Assembly?

...will be held on Milano Bresso Airport (LIMB) on Saturday June 6th. Any European pilot who wants to participate is more than welcome. Just let them know of your arrival at least two days earlier by email through their website (www.aopa.it) to they can arrange the catering.