

MODEL AERONAUTICAL
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.
N e w s l e t t e r
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R/C Frequency and Safety.

The British Model Flying Association (BMFA) recently issued a safety bulletin warning of a characteristic of PCM radios. As background, it reported an accident last March in the United Kingdom when control was lost of a model on take-off. It climbed to about one hundred feet then dived to the ground, striking a twelve-year old boy on the head and killing him.

The accident was attributed to interference causing the PCM receiver to go into "failsafe". The "failsafe" was set at "hold", that is, the controls including the throttle remained at the position they were when the interference was experienced. The interference is believed to have been caused by a second transmitter on the frequency being turned on.

Interviews with owners of PCM equipment found that about 80% did not know their equipment had a "failsafe" feature. Most had not altered the factory setting which is generally "hold". The bulletin recommended that PCM users become familiar with the control options offered with their equipment, especially by reading the handbook supplied. Another recommendation was that the throttle be programmed to go to low if interference was experienced. This latter recommendation has drawn criticism with opponents saying that that could cause an accident. The point is, if a model goes into "failsafe", it is almost certainly going to crash. The only uncertainty is where.

(Nearly thirty years ago, Bob Young – Mr Silvertone – demonstrated the successful recovery of a model by parachute when radio failure was simulated. I think he turned the transmitter off. Perhaps he should dust off the drawings).

There have undoubtedly been instances in Australia of "failsafe" causing the loss of models. However, our method of frequency control, if properly enforced, will go a long way in reducing the possibility of interference from another transmitter. The tentative conclusion that the interfering transmitter was on the same frequency might have been issued with crossed fingers; tests a few years ago in Australia showed that operation at 10KHz separation, which is used by the BMFA, was unsafe at a typical club field. The MAAA requires operation at 20 KHz separation. The BMFA, with only 26 spots approved for the radio control of model aircraft – and those at 10KHz separation – could not tolerate any increase in the separation and the consequent reduction in the number of spots.

I recommend that your club use a Silvertone™ Keyboard or equivalent and that all club members, especially newcomers, be instructed in its use.

If you have not seen it and a complementary report, the Safety Bulletin can be viewed on the BMFA web site under "News". That site is linked with the MAAA web site.

There is an item on the Agenda for the MAAA 2000 Council conference for the use of 10 KHz separation to be discussed with the possibility of a special meeting of the MAAA R/C Frequency Sub committee being convened to re-examine its use.

Airspace

Over the past couple of years, I have been writing about the imminent introduction of a new Civil Aviation Regulation (CAR) Part 101 intended to control the operation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, including model aircraft. Advice just a few months ago was that the CAR would come into force in June 2000.

The October/November 1999 issue of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) newsletter "RFP Update" now describes what was issued as NPRM 9806RP0 as a "Discussion Paper" and not a Notice of Proposed Rule Making. It is now proposed that a NPRM will be issued in June 2000, a Summary of Responses (SOR) issued by December 2000, the Rule to be made in December 2001 with it to commence in December 2002.

Do not discard your Manual of Procedures just yet, Civil Aviation Order 95-21 has a lot of life left in it.

Six-month Membership

The 1999 MAAA Council conference decided to replace the then concessional membership – up to fifteen months membership at the fee for the coming year, to new members joining between 1st April and 30th June – with up to six months membership to new members joining between 1st January and the 30th June at half the current fee. Previous members whose membership had lapsed for at least five years were and are entitled to the same concessions

There have been instances of recent members attempting to gain six months membership for the period July to December. This option was never intended by the Council.

MAAA Executive

The initial two-year term of office of the MAAA President and the Technical Secretary expires at the Council Conference in February 2000. Nominations for the positions were called for but, at the closing date for nominations, only the present incumbents had been nominated. It is therefore certain that they will be declared in the positions, this time for three years.

The appointment of the current secretary/treasurer expires in 2001. By decision of the 1999 Council conference, the two positions may no longer be held by the one person after that date. Nominations for the positions will be called later in the year with probably the same deadline as for receipt of agenda items; this so that details of nominations can be issued with the agenda.

MAAA Numbers

The Model Aeronautical Association was formed at the 1948 Camden Nationals at which time it was agreed that State Associations would continue to issue their own numbers with a prefix (Q = Qld, N = NSW, V = Vic etc.). The 1954 Nationals meeting decided to issue numbers nationally. Until 1958, this was done but numbers were re-issued if membership was allowed to lapse. In 1958, the Nationals meeting agreed that a number would be issued only once and would not be transferable. This system has continued to the present day.

Annual Conferences

You may have noticed that the meetings were referred to as “Nationals” meetings. Until 1985, the meetings were held on one (or perhaps two) nights during the National Championships. Delegates were nominated by the State Associations from those

competing in the Championships. These delegates were instructed how to vote and were not permitted to deviate from the instructions no matter how convincing was the argument to change the vote.

In 1985, the first of the Council Conferences as we now know them was held. The delegates to these are (generally) the President and the Secretary of the State associations. Sadly, some delegates are given voting instructions by their State associations and are not permitted to change them. They might as well mail in their votes and not attend.

The meetings are generally held over two days – Saturday and Sunday - with the Friday night being available if it seems extra time will be needed. The Council sets policy at these meetings to guide the Executive and also sets a budget within the Executive must work. The Executive has no votes at the meeting.

The Executive is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Association within the policy guidelines laid down by the Council.

International Relations

The MAAA is affiliated with the Federation Aeronautique International (FAI) through its membership of the Australian Sports Aviation Confederation (ASAC) which is recognised by the FAI as Australia’s National Airsport Control (NAC). Australia has been sending a delegate to the Plenary Meetings of the International Aeromodelling Commission of the FAI since 1974. Previously it was represented by an Englishman who still represents New Zealand.

The FAI is the controlling body for all airsports - parachuting, ballooning, gliding, hang-gliding, aeromodelling etc. – around the world. It sanctions international competitions and world records.

Australia pays Swiss Francs 33000.00 - about the same number of Australian dollars - per year for membership of the FAI although it has been trying unsuccessfully to have that figure reduced. All of the members of the ASAC contribute to that CHF33000.00 although MAAA members pay half (\$3.00/member) of what members of the other airsports associations pay. About half of the \$3.00 is transferred to the FAI, the balance funds ASAC.

There is a move to introduce two-tier membership such that those who do not want ASAC/FAI affiliation can opt out and save \$3.00/year. The downside is that those who want to retain FAI affiliation may have to pay up to \$300.00 for the privilege. Do you really miss that \$3.00?