

Avoid a **Bad Avoid**

When you're in your aircraft, keeping a 'good lookout' should be just as automatic as 'look both ways before you cross the road'.

CAA Aviation Safety Adviser, Carlton Campbell, says right-of-way rules are well understood, but pilots don't always respond to situations instinctively.

Right-of-way rules are outlined in Part 91, under rule 91.229. At their most basic, the rules state that aircraft approaching head-on both turn right.

But Carlton says you can't apply the right-of-way rules if you don't see someone in the first place.

He says some pilots have become over-reliant on the radio.

"People have got themselves locked into feeling that if they make a radio call, then they've done their bit. But no, they haven't. A good lookout is the fundamental thing.

"I was at a safety meeting recently, and pilots were constantly talking about the importance of radio calls and I had to remind them that the radio call is the secondary thing. The primary tool is the lookout. They've got to see somebody to avoid them, not just hear them to avoid them."

Nathan Clarke, the CFI of the Canterbury Aero Club and Safety Coordinator for the Rangiora airfield, agrees.

"People get reliant on the radio. Lookout is the primary source of traffic separation."

In fact, sometimes a radio call might set you off looking in the wrong place because not all calls are accurate.

Carlton says pilots also have more distractions now.

"In all the flight tests that I observe, the common factor is that people's lookout is not as good as it should be."

He says because joining procedures at aerodromes are now documented in the AIP, pilots tend to look down at it when they get in controlled airspace to reassure themselves that they've got the correct information.

He says more sophisticated technology has also had unintended consequences.

"There's a lot more information to interpret as a result of glass cockpits which can lead to people becoming distracted."

He says it's the responsibility of pilots to exercise self-discipline to minimise the time spent viewing things in the cockpit.

Engraining in Training

Nathan Clarke says if you have an aircraft coming head on, it should be instinctive to turn right rather than having to think about it.

He says a big thing when teaching new pilots, is that they are aware of where the traffic's coming from.

"For instance, when transiting through busy airspace, position the aircraft on the right hand side of where you think the traffic that's coming head on will be."

Nathan says cruising levels are also important.

"Many pilots insist on transiting below 3000 feet, especially helicopters, when being above would give them more protection."

He says pilots who don't get to put the rules into practice can be at a disadvantage.

"We're quite busy down here in Canterbury, so pilots have to apply it a lot as they transit around the place. Probably the ones most vulnerable are those who don't have a lot of traffic, as they don't get much exposure to it."

He says scenario-based training is good for teaching right of way and is often used to confirm a pilot would react in the right manner in the case of a head-on. ■

