

Joining the **Circuit** at an **Uncontrolled** Aerodrome

Recent reports from flying schools, where pilots unfamiliar with the aerodrome have blundered through the circuit, have highlighted the need for a refresher on circuit etiquette.

The overhead join will always be a vital ingredient in maintaining aviation safety at unattended aerodromes, and on most occasions it will be the best way to join.

It takes very little extra time to join overhead, especially if you have planned for the most likely scenario. Then you simply need to confirm that the conditions are as you expected, and make good use of the opportunity an overhead join gives you to see other traffic.

The Overhead Join

The key to a successful circuit join is situational awareness. Get it and keep it. If you lose it, remove yourself from the circuit until you have it back.

Preparation

Be well organised and anticipate each step of the process. If you are planning to join an unfamiliar aerodrome circuit, then your preparation begins on the ground.

- » Study the appropriate up-to-date charts and *AIP New Zealand, Vol 4* thoroughly.
- » Note any prominent reference points, spot heights and terrain that will be in the vicinity of the aerodrome.

- » Think about;
 - aerodrome elevation,
 - circuit direction,
 - radio frequencies,
 - runway length, surface and displaced thresholds,
 - windsock locations, and
 - obstacles on the approach.
- » Start forming a mental picture of how you will locate and approach the aerodrome.

Read the aerodrome notes in the *AIP New Zealand, Vol 4*, they provide local knowledge and highlight any legal requirements or special procedures.

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Joining the Circuit Directly

If you are familiar with the aerodrome you will already know whether joining overhead is appropriate.

If it is not local practice to join overhead, you should have no problem in joining the circuit directly (i.e. via the downwind, base leg, or final approach) by observing the movement of other traffic.

Make use of your local knowledge and maintain a careful lookout and listening watch for other traffic to help you determine your position in the circuit sequence.

At an unattended aerodrome or where an Aerodrome Flight Information Service

(AFIS) is being provided, you may elect to join directly – under certain conditions:

- » the runway in use and aerodrome traffic are known; and
- » if radio equipped, joining intentions are advised to the AFIS or to “aerodrome traffic”; and
- » when sequenced to give priority to other aircraft already established in the circuit. If this is not possible, you must join via the overhead procedure; and

» when entering or flying within the circuit, all turns must be made in the direction appropriate to the runway in use.

Joining straight-in does not allow you to view all the windsocks, inspect the surface condition of the runway, note any ground movements or hazards, or assess any other unexpected situations. If you do choose to join this way, **expect the unexpected.** ■



Workshop for Senior Persons – Hokitika

The CAA is holding a further training workshop for Senior Persons responsible for Air Operations in organisations with Part 119 / 135 certification, Chief Pilots and Chief Flight Instructors from Part 137 and Part 141 organisations.

The two-day course aims to equip senior persons with the knowledge and tools they need.

Register via the CAA web site, see “Seminars and Courses”. A registration fee of \$100 will be charged to help cover costs.

October 13 – 14
Beachfront Hotel,
111 Revell St, Hokitika

Aviation Safety & Security Concerns

Available office hours (voicemail after hours).

0508 4 SAFETY
 (0508 472 338)

info@caa.govt.nz

For all aviation-related safety and security concerns

Accident Notification

24-hour 7-day toll-free telephone

0508 ACCIDENT
 (0508 222 433)

The Civil Aviation Act (1990) requires notification “as soon as practicable”.