



Engineering News

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Chief Technical Officer

This will be my last Engineering News as I am stepping down as CTO at the end of September. It has been an interesting time to say the least! When I took over from Dick Stratton in 2000 we had no idea that EASA was about to descend upon us and were just grateful at the time that the "Millennium Bug" did not create a meltdown of all the computer systems as predicted.

During the past decade and a half we have had an overhaul of the inspector authorisation system and training, new procedures and guidance manuals; the majority of our business is now done online and we have had a new web site (soon to be updated again). Then there was the transition where, together, we transitioned over 2500 gliders into the EASA airworthiness system. That created more work than anyone could have imagined but has now put us in a better place. I have met many new and interesting characters, not least the BGA inspector force. During my time at the helm some have found the upgrading of paperwork and recording difficult to accept but, quite apart from EASA, the world has moved on and we now live in a more litigious age where individuals are being held to account for their actions and everything we have done is to help you stay on the straight and narrow path and to produce safe and airworthy aircraft. All but the newest inspectors will have been to at least one, and probably two, inspector seminars - the latest round encompassing a Human Factors in Engineering foundation course. As you probably know this is a subject very much in the regulator's eye right now and if the seminar gets us thinking about the subject, we will have achieved our goal. Technology has moved on and we are now seeing newer design gliders with alternative forms of propulsion (electric and gas turbine); who knows what will be next?

Many of the achievements would not have been possible without your understanding and assistance and, on the odd occasion, your patience and for that, I thank you.

My parting message is one of succession planning. I believe the biggest challenge facing us is the ageing inspector force and we should encourage new (and younger, if possible!) inspector "apprentices". The BGA is looking at how we may help to deliver more training with the dual objectives of bringing on new inspectors and developing established inspector skills.

As for my replacement, the BGA is delighted that Gordon MacDonald has accepted our offer of employment as Chief Technical Officer and I wish him all the best. However I will not be completely disappearing off the scene and will be assisting the BGA with some ongoing projects.

Inspector Renewal

Renewal forms have now been emailed to all inspectors. Please renew promptly as all authorisations expire at the end of September and to certify using your BGA authorisation you must be current. If you did not receive your renewal application, please contact the BGA office.

Inspector Seminar

We are holding a continuation training seminar at Husbands Bosworth on 20 September 2014, starting 09.30 promptly. To book please contact Debbie at the BGA office.

Due to the phasing of expiry dates it is probable that this will be the last such seminar for some time; please check you training expiry on your authorisation certificate.

Glider Integrity

It is appreciated that this topic has featured in the not too distant past but gliders being incorrectly assembled or controls not connected prior to flight still features too highly in the accident stats and of course is completely preventable.

There are several very important factors contributing to the glider (lack of) integrity issue. Firstly, does the person fully understand the glider that is being assembled (rigged)? How does the connector work? How does it fit together? What does a wrongly or correctly connected connector look like? How difficult is the pin to install? etc. These are an areas where your expertise as a glider inspector can help: perhaps offer to instruct on these issues, demonstrate how to connect that L'Hotellier that you can't quite see, and such like. It is appreciated that some pilots will not have the same manual dexterity or technical insight that you have as inspectors but that is where you can excel by imparting your knowledge to others with the possibility of saving their life.

Actively promote a policy of non-interruption during rigging and daily inspections. If rigging becomes a social event (some gliders needing a team to rig or mates just chewing the fat over the latest political blunder), then take 5 minutes time out to quietly go through the glider you have just rigged and double check it. Its very embarrassing if someone spots your main pin in its bag on your seat at the launch point!

Teach the uninitiated how to carry out positive control checks, demonstrating both correctly rigged and connected gliders and those where something is not properly connected but not obvious. Remember that some, usually older, glider control systems are rather poorly designed so that a non-connected control can mimic one that has been connected if only a deflection check is done.

Glider integrity issues is an area that we can help to fix but we really do need to think about it.

Jim Hammerton, signing off as BGA CTO.