

Topic of the month: May 2024

Safe Thermalling

Now that the soaring season seems to have arrived and with the ICL and SCCDW already past, now seems a good time to discuss the thermalling protocols.



Before Flight

- Make sure your Flarm firmware is up to date and working.
- Make sure your canopy is clean. (Especially in club aircraft!)
- Check your audio vario is working.

Joining a Thermal

- Gliders already established in a thermal have the right of way.
- All pilots shall circle in the same direction as any glider(s) already established in lift.
- If there are gliders thermalling in opposite directions, the joining gliders shall turn in the same direction as the nearest glider (least vertical separation).
- The entry to the turn should be planned to retain continual visual contact with all other aircraft at or near the planned entry height, and to ensure no glider already turning will be required to manoeuvre to avoid the joining glider.
- If possible, join the same circular track as the other glider, or if that is not practical, join a circle wider than that of the thermalling glider and only move onto that glider's circle when you can achieve safe separation.

Staying in a thermal

- Lookout is always paramount. Never allow your monitoring of in-cockpit equipment to interfere with your lookout. Maintain visual contact with

established gliders and position your glider so established pilots can see your glider.

- When at a similar level to another glider, never turn inside or point your glider at or ahead of the other glider unless you can guarantee safe separation and maintain visual contact.
- If you lose visual contact with a nearby glider or if you cannot guarantee safe separation, leave the thermal.
- Look out for other aircraft joining or converging in height.
- Look outside the turn and behind before straightening up. Do not manoeuvre sharply unless clear of all other aircraft.



More useful resources (Including the soaring protocol which is repeated above) can be found on the BGA website here:

<https://members.gliding.co.uk/safety/managing-flying-risk-index/managing-flying-risk-safe-thermal-soaring/>

Happy Flying

Lachlan