BE WIRE AWARE

Even in remote areas, you need to be aware of, and report, potential wire danger.

Wires are a significant hazard within New Zealand's navigable airspace. In the past five years, there have been 28 wire strikes reported to the CAA.

Overhead wires, power and telephone lines, aerials, and cables are a serious threat to any aircraft flying at low level (under 500 ft). Agricultural aircraft, both fixed wing and helicopter, are especially susceptible due to the nature of the work they do.

Before flying, ensure you plan for, and are aware of, potential hazards. Keep up-to-date with *AIP New Zealand* which advises the location and maximum height of hazardous overhead wires. Keep in mind that farm wires aren't advised in the AIP.

Three places to be particularly vigilant about wires are:

- below 500 ft AGL over flat terrain
- over water – especially crossing rivers
- any time you're operating below the ridgetops.

Remember, the safest way to cross wires is to overfly them at, or near, a supporting structure. This is because the structures are more easily identifiable than the wires. But if overflying a structure is not practicable, you should maintain an altitude at least as high as the structure.

If you come across potential wire hazards, it's a good idea to talk about them directly with the landowner, if possible. Alternatively, get in touch with the 'Down to the Wire' and 'Let's Get 'Em Down' campaigns, who can work with farmers to remove wire hazards. 'Down to the Wire' has 30 industry ambassadors around the country who can answer questions on wires.

For more information on wire hazards, including past *Vector* articles, and to download the *Wire Strike Information Sheet*, visit www.caa.govt.nz/wires.

ANTIHISTAMINES AND DROWSINESS

When it comes to treating seasonal allergies like hay fever, pilots should be very careful about anything that contains antihistamines.

A 2011 FAA study highlighted this when it found sedating antihistamines were the most commonly detected medication in fatal accidents.

"Part of the problem is there is a chunk of antihistamines sold on the market as non-sedating, but they are not compatible with flight safety," says CAA Senior Medical Officer Claude Preitner.

Steroid nasal sprays are preferable because they don't affect the whole body. They need to be used regularly as they take a few days to take effect.

If oral medication is needed, the CAA specifically allows three antihistamines: Loratadine, Desloratadine and Fexofenadine.

"These are the only three which don't cause drowsiness. A pilot can take them and fly, assuming there is no other background medical condition that could be a show stopper," says Claude.

Pilots should still test them long before flying to check whether they have any negative reactions.

Any other antihistamines must not be used within 48 hours before flying.

Claude says some antihistamines are traditionally seen as non-sedating but still cannot be used.

"Cetirizine is commonly prescribed by GPs. Although labelled non-sedating, they are sedating enough to be incompatible with flying, and not all GPs necessarily know that."

Claude says if there is any doubt, or a pilot has had a change of medical condition that warrants the use of medication, they should talk to their medical examiner, who is trained in aviation medicine.

"They can tell you if something is okay, or they could say 'if you take this you need to ground yourself'. If the pilot prefers to engage directly with CAA, they can do that too."

For medical enquiries email: med@caa.govt.nz, or call the aviation medicine team on 04 560 9466.