



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

November 2022



Photo for illustrative purposes only: Robert Buchel/Shutterstock

## Understanding who's where and how to fit into the pattern is possibly the most important part of the join

For this year's final Insight I've chosen an example of something that crops up pretty regularly – and follows on from an observation in October's Insight – the overhead join. This particular **Airprox (2022102)** happened when a Robin DR400 and a PA-28 ended up in the same place at the same height on final.

Both pilots had joined through the overhead and had electronic conspicuity devices. Unfortunately, the PA-28 wasn't showing on the DR400's equipment (possibly because there was no Mode C detected from the PA-28's transponder) and the PA-28 pilot associated the DR400's callsign with a different aircraft that had joined the airfield ahead of the other two they had seen on their EC display.

In this case the DR400 pilot flew a wider-than-usual circuit, extending the downwind leg to generate space from the aircraft in front. But because the PA-28 pilot had mis-associated the DR400's callsign with a different aircraft, they positioned themselves on a tighter downwind leg than that flown by the DR400 and followed the wrong aircraft.

The PA-28 pilot did see the DR400 outside and ahead on downwind, but thought it was outside the ATZ and therefore (they thought) not in the circuit pattern.

When the DR400 turned onto base leg they saw the PA-28 cross in front, but they too discounted it as they believed it wasn't circuit traffic because it continued on a perpendicular track. The result was that

both pilots turned independently onto final in the belief that the other aircraft was of no concern as it 'was not circuit traffic' and found themselves close together on final approach.

I'd like to offer some thoughts on how you can, perhaps, prevent this kind of situation happening to you. Firstly, the overhead join – the overhead is not simply 'a point in space' through which you need to pass to get to the deadside. The rationale for the join is, among other things, that pilots should establish in the overhead to gain situational awareness on traffic already in the pattern.

This is possibly the most important part of the join and I would encourage pilots to only dispense with 'establishing' in the

overhead if they are *absolutely certain* they know exactly what's going on in the pattern. Departing the overhead without full awareness can be a recipe for confusion.

Secondly, it's difficult for other pilots to predict exactly 'where' you intend to integrate into the pattern, so don't be afraid to announce your intentions for the benefit of all – it might just be that somebody responds to your call to let you know about something you might have missed or not fully taken account of.

Thirdly, if things change, or appear to have changed, then don't be afraid to speak up and ask where other aircraft are – don't assume the one you can see is the one you can hear on the radio.

Additionally, assuming that an aircraft is not in the pattern because it's not exactly where you expect the pattern to be is a dangerous assumption. Again, if unsure then ask – you might discover that the aircraft you discounted is the one that you need to be the most concerned about.

Finally, have a plan for when things don't go according to plan, and then have another plan for when Plan B doesn't work either...

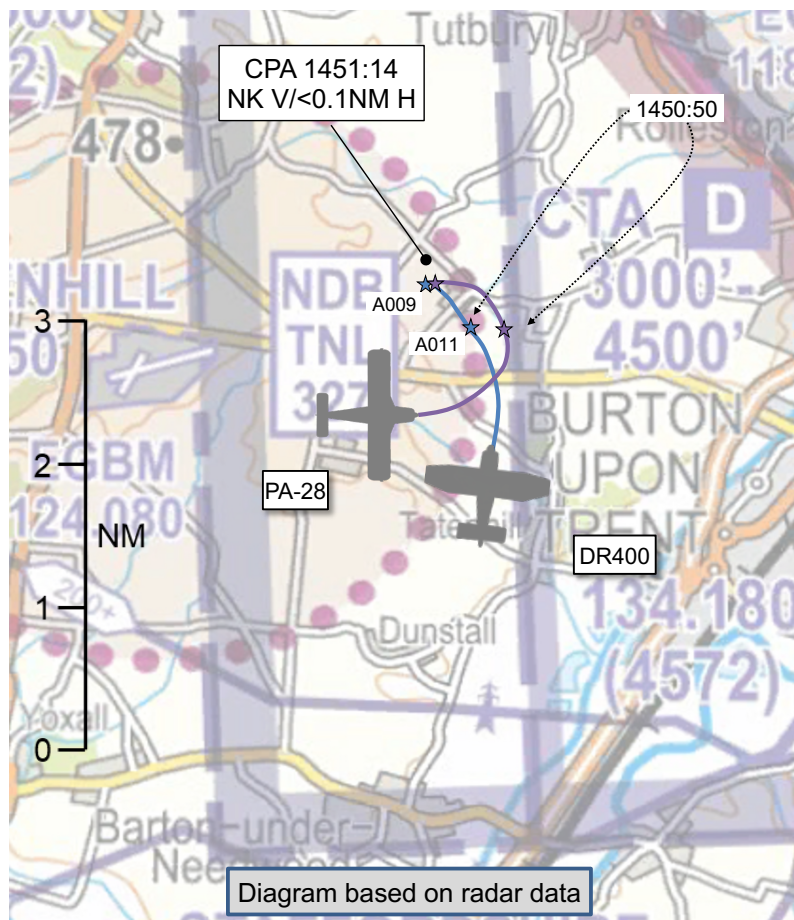
In the case above, the DR400 pilot had decided to fly wide downwind to generate extra separation from the aircraft in front, and then extended downwind slightly for further separation, but they didn't announce their intentions. If what you are flying is, or could be considered to be, non-standard then announce it over the radio. That way other pilots will have a fighting chance of 'conforming with the pattern of traffic'.

There's some good advice in the Skyway Code regarding overhead joins ([CAP1535S Skyway Code Version 3.pdf](https://www.caa.co.uk/CAP1535S_Skyway_Code_Version_3.pdf)). It's well worth having a read of it and playing through a few join/circuit scenarios and 'what-ifs' in your head.

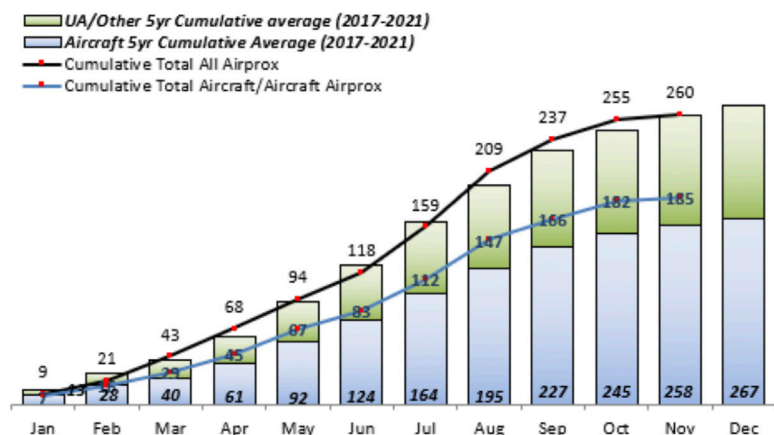
**UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP**

This month we evaluated 28 Airprox, including 12 UA/Other events – 11 of these UA/Other Airprox were reported by the piloted aircraft and one was reported by the UA flyer which was fully evaluated.

Of the 17 full evaluations, six were classified as risk-bearing – three were Category A and three Category B. The Board didn't make any Safety Recommendations at the November meeting.



**2022 Airprox - Cumulative Distribution**



As you can see from the Cumulative Distribution graphic, aircraft-to-aircraft report numbers are approximately 15% higher than the five-year average. While the averages includes the period of COVID-19 restrictions, it's also worth noting that the total number of reports received so far in 2022 is about 11% higher than the same period in 2021.

This is encouraging in terms of reporting but perhaps a bit disappointing that we're still seeing high numbers of Airprox.

Ask yourself 'what can I do to minimise the chances of having an Airprox (or worse)?' and please do read through some of the other Insights on the UKAB website to get some ideas of what has happened and situations that could still occur and affect you.

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