

ABF Pilot Training Manual

Part 4

ABF Code of Conduct (CODE)

VERSION 1 – JUNE 2006

IMPORTANT

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The Code of Conduct exam

- Twelve question multiple choice exam.
- Time allowed 40 minutes.
- Minimum pass mark is 80% (10 correct answers).
- No study materials may be brought into the exam, and no equipment is required.

Introduction

This Code is a guide for the conduct that is required of all pilots and crews, to maintain positive public relations with local communities, farmers and landowners. It is vital that we retain their goodwill if we are to continue to enjoy both sport and commercial ballooning. As a general principle, all balloonists should adopt an approach that is always courteous, friendly, sensitive and in no way causes inconvenience or ill-feeling. The thoughtless actions of one pilot or crew member can undo all the good actions of others.

The countryside is the farmer's livelihood; grass is a crop, livestock are easily frightened, and farmers depend on electricity supplies for many purposes. We all recognise that if we land uninvited on somebody's field, the farmer is our host (though sometimes unwillingly), and we depend on his goodwill. Certain responsibilities follow from this, the most important of which have been listed here.

All pilots must ensure that their crew, whether ABF members or not, are aware of and follow this Code at all times. **A pilot may be penalised as a result of a breach of the Code by his crew.**

1. Human relations

Be aware of a person's body language, as it may indicate the best course of action far sooner than words. Introduce yourself and use the landowner's name in conversation. Spend a few minutes explaining the balloon equipment, the flight planning process and potential steering problems. Do not dramatise, but leave the impression of a safe orderly flight about to start or of having just finished. Ask about local events you might get involved in. Invite locals to your next club or social event, consider your local club or group having one day a year for a particular group of landowners. Do not dress too flamboyantly, as this may put across an image of flashiness or well-to-do people out playing with expensive toys. Do not have post-flight parties in the paddocks unless you are invited to and the landowner is welcome to join you. Quaffing champers and having fun while locals are struggling with the farm crisis is not the best basis for a strong relationship.

After landing on a calm day, if locals are in sight consider keeping the balloon inflated until they arrive, as people often express disappointment on arriving after the balloon is deflated. Perhaps give a tether ride or a hop into the next paddock. Address any problems from the landing with the landowner before packing up; make

it first priority, not something you get around to when you are ready to leave. Be a good listener, and consider the landowner's point of view even if you disagree.

2. Sensitive Zones (SZ's)

A Sensitive Zone is an area where practical flight limitations have been set down in order to avoid potential landowner problems. SZ's are established voluntarily by balloonists as a result of local knowledge and experience, and apply to all balloon flights.

Pilots are required to check the details of any SZ's in their intended flying area (see Flight Planning below) and to carefully avoid SZ's during flight. The ABF will apply penalties if SZ's are not respected (see Penalties below).

2.1 SZ details

The following details are required to list an SZ:

- Map name or number, and grid reference.
- Boundary definition - EITHER a circle with a centre point (grid reference) and a radius around that point (eg 500 metres or 1km) and any identification shown on the map, (eg Hillview farm), OR define the boundaries of the property or area as precisely as possible by a combination of grid references, names and reference to prominent features.
- Height – EITHER the minimum height AGL in feet at which the SZ should be overflown, OR that it is a No Landing area (no minimum height applies).
- Reason – eg, horse stud, unfriendly farmer, seed farm, pig sheds etc.

2.2 Adding and removing SZ's

SZ's are usually created where balloons may fly from time to time, seldom as the result of a one-off flight in an area not likely to be revisited. Care should be taken to avoid creating an SZ unless it is clearly needed. An established horse stud/intensive poultry or pig farm/ostrich farm may deserve to be an SZ. However, if you have accidentally flown close to animals it is usually sufficient to assure the landowner that you will avoid them in future, and not create an SZ on that occasion.

A farmer who reacts negatively to a balloon is not necessarily a reason to immediately create an SZ. If there is no specific issue such as crop or livestock, he may just be having a bad day. His attitude may quickly become more positive if you take some time to explain how ballooning works, how little risk it has for his property. You can offer him a look around the basket or even a short flight.

If you believe a new SZ should be created, ask the advice of your ABF Regional Representative or the ABF Operations Manager first; if they agree, it may help to advise the landowner once the SZ details have been listed. If you find that the reason for an existing SZ has ceased and it can be removed from the list, you should advise the ABF without delay.

3. Flight Planning

- 3.1 All balloonists should have adequate insurance cover for property damage sustained by third parties.
- 3.2 Do not fly unless you are reasonably certain that your flight path will be over country that is suitable for landing. For example, you should avoid flying over large areas of standing crop in light wind conditions.
- 3.3 Mark any current SZ's on your flying maps. For details, contact the ABF central office and your ABF Regional Representative, and check with local balloonists.
- 3.4 Make sure that your balloon has a serviceable fire extinguisher in the basket (as required by CASA regulations).

4. Launch

- 4.1 Maintain a current list of launch sites where the landowner has given his approval.
- 4.2 Permission should be obtained from the landowner before driving on to a new field.
- 4.3 Make every effort to ensure that your launch site is not in an area adjacent to residential properties.
- 4.4 When winds are in the same direction day after day, vary your launch site so that no single area is frequently overflowed.
- 4.5 Check that during the climb-out immediately downwind of the take-off site, the balloon will not have to fly low over livestock or houses.
- 4.6 Achieve appropriate operational altitude as soon as possible.
- 4.7 The only vehicle that should leave the public roadway is the retrieve.
- 4.8 Brief your crew and other helpers to leave all gates as you find them.

5. In Flight

- 5.1 Minimise flying over heavily developed areas as much as possible.
- 5.2 Always fly at such a height that you do not cause disturbance to livestock or sleeping people. Be particularly careful of young animals. Use a quiet burner system when available and appropriate.
- 5.3 If it appears that livestock have been disturbed for any reason, note the location of the incident and check with the farmer after landing. If you cannot locate the farmer, talk to locals or neighbours, leaving your name and contact details.
- 5.4 Set up a descent path from operational altitude that will provide a landing in the briefest possible time and avoid prolonged low flying.

6. Landing

- 6.1 Maintain a map marked with the landing sites where the owner has given approval.
- 6.2 Select a landing field that should cause the least inconvenience to the landowner. Be conservative and land with plenty of fuel rather than run low on fuel and be forced to land somewhere less suitable.
- 6.3 Particular care should be taken not to disturb or land near livestock that are about to, or have recently, given birth. Young animals separated from their mothers soon after birth may fail to bond and recognise each other, and so may die.
- 6.4 Learn to recognise local crops. Take care during the months when crops cover large areas of the countryside, and remember the higher risk of fire around harvest time.
- 6.5 Make sure that pilot lights are out before you make ground contact, even on intermediate landings (as required in the Airmanship section of this manual).
- 6.6 Before using a handling line or trail rope, make sure the ground below and ahead is clear of livestock, overhead power and telephone lines, buildings or other property that could be damaged.

7. Retrieve

- 7.1 Immediately after landing, take all reasonable steps to discourage onlookers from coming into the field and trespassing on the farmer's property.
- 7.2 Contact the landowner or farmer as soon as possible after landing, and obtain permission to drive onto the field.
- 7.3 Only one retrieve vehicle and sufficient crew per balloon should enter private property.
- 7.4 If permission is given to retrieve a balloon which has landed in crop, drive around the edge of the field to the nearest point to minimise driving on the crop.
- 7.5 Never make a tethered flight or re-inflate the balloon in your landing field unless you have obtained permission to do so from the farmer.
- 7.6 If the landowner or farmer cannot be contacted after landing, you must try to obtain his address or telephone number and contact him as soon as possible afterwards.
- 7.7 If damage is caused, or if the farmer is upset in some way, attend to the problem immediately, before packing up if necessary. Contact the farmer, exchange names and addresses, and ask the farmer to write to you if any unseen damage has taken place. On all such occasions, offer to leave your name and address.
- 7.8 Ensure that farm gates are left as you found them.

8. Penalties

The ABF Operations Manager will investigate reported breaches of the above Code of Conduct.

A blatant breach may result in suspension of the pilot's certificate.

If a breach is not considered blatant, one warning will be given. A repeated breach may result in suspension of the pilot's certificate.

ARE YOU UP TO DATE?

*New regulations and procedures may apply from time to time.
Check on the ABF website that you have the latest version of these study notes.*

YOUR FEEDBACK PLEASE!

*If you have any corrections or suggested improvements to these study notes
please advise the ABF Operations Manager.*