



## **F**itness to fly - physical and mental

In ST5 - "Preparation", I wrote about the general level of physical preparation that will help with your flying.

This article concentrates on assessing your physical and mental state on the flying day itself.

The **IMSAFE** checklist is a personal health assessment used to ensure the pilot is healthy before each flight. The letters stand for:

### ***Illness, Medication, Stress, Alcohol, Fatigue, Emotions.***

Any **illness** will affect your performance, concentration and abilities. Be honest with yourself if you are ill. Are you OK to fly?

Some **medications** and recreational drugs can affect your decision making abilities and cause drowsiness. Are you taking any of these?

A bit of **stress** may enhance your performance, but there is a tipping point above which your performance declines dramatically. Are you suffering from any stresses - work related, relationship related, financial or otherwise?

Commercial pilots may not fly an aircraft within 8 hours after the consumption of any **alcohol**. If intoxication occurred a more conservative approach is to wait 24 hours before flying. Paraglider and hang-glider pilots are no different.

**Fatigue** covers both physical exhaustion and lack of sleep. I know that my decision making when flying is not as "crisp" as it could be if I have had a poor sleep the night before. Hike and Fly competitors are at particular risk. A highly experienced MHGC paraglider pilot was competing in France earlier this Summer and on take off "turned the wrong way" resulting in a crash. Fatigue was to blame.

A recent bereavement or split from a partner can play havoc with your **emotions** making concentration difficult, leading to poor decision making. Are you OK?

The temptation to fly is enormous if the conditions are good. But be honest with yourself, are you up to it? Although it is difficult to let the opportunity pass, it is always better to give it a miss if you are not OK and wait for another day. Infinitely better than injuring yourself.