

Subsidised Aircraft Tracking enhances safety

New Zealand pilots are being encouraged to invest in aircraft tracking systems with a recently released offer from spidertracks. This is being supported by Airways NZ, who are subsidising subscription costs for the service as part of their commitment to enhancing the safety of the GA community.

THE OFFER recognises the important role that aircraft tracking technology can play in pilot safety by providing a graphic flight following capability. "Airways has a clear mandate to support this initiative and that is safety," says Airways programme manager, Rob Irwin. "Airways does not actively track GA aircraft on radar when they are operating outside controlled airspace and there has been some confusion about that in the GA community. We're trying to get the message out there that one of the best ways to guarantee someone knows where you are is to use a satellite tracking system and have the information available and displayed on a computer at home or at the office."

Every month, Airways deals with an estimated 230 flight plans going overdue. The number of false alarms generated by pilots forgetting to amend or terminate their flight plan occupies resources that should be ready and waiting to help those in genuine need. In October 2008, Airways surveyed members of the GA community and found that a large number of respondents were interested in finding out more about satellite based aircraft tracking systems.

"From the feedback we received and subsequent conversations, there was a general trend towards options that would enable the GA community to look after themselves and potentially enjoy a greater level of comfort than Airways currently provides," says Mr Irwin.

The spidertracks offer enables owners of ZK-registered aircraft



spidertracks screen image showing internet based aircraft tracking in action

to purchase a spidertracks satellite tracking device for only \$1295 (plus GST) and receive a free keypad. The package is usually priced at \$3300. Airways will support the purchase by way of covering the first six months subscription to the satellite network, which is normally USD19.95 per month.

Spidertracks marketing manager Rachel Donald says the response to the offer, launched at the recent Pilot Expo, has been very positive. "We're very excited to be able to make our system accessible to all New Zealand pilots and they're jumping at the chance to purchase at such an affordable price."

The spidertracks story

THE IDEA for spidertracks was formed in 2005 when Michael Erceg, a New Zealand businessman flying his helicopter between Auckland and Queenstown went missing, resulting in an extensive two week search.

Manawatu engineer and helicopter pilot Don Sandbrook saw an opportunity to develop a tracking system that would enable overdue aircraft to be found quickly and easily, regardless of whether their locator beacons were activated or not. He searched the world for a suitable system and realising there was no inexpensive, portable and simple solution on the market, set about creating one.

With engineer James McCarthy, Don combined a GPS position receiver and separate transmitter into one unit without the need for external antenna, thus creating a very portable, affordable tracking device. The solution offered global coverage that can be used by anyone, everywhere. The patented technology was partnered with the global Iridium Satellite network to transmit data to internet-based tracking software.

The first spider tracking solution was sold to Taupo Eurocopter owner Bruce Bartley. Recognising the potential of the business, Bruce offered to invest in the product and Spidertracks Limited was established with Don, James and Bruce as equal partners.



spidertracks is small, elegant and portable

As the first to offer a truly portable satellite tracking system that can be easily installed by users, spidertracks opened up a new market and created demand for simple, cost-effective systems.

It now has an established global client base, providing tracking solutions for aircraft fleets across Australasia, North America and Europe, Asia and Antarctica. Being Automated Flight Following (AFF) accredited, clients also include contractors to the United States and Canadian fire and forestry services.

The company is focused on product ease of use and long term reliability. The latest materials and technology are utilised, with ISO9002 certification helping to ensure that high manufacturing standards are maintained.

In 2008 a global distribution deal was signed with Cessna Aircraft. This has opened up further markets and opportunities for the company. Spidertracks is now in use in 30 countries and though it was developed for the aviation industry, it has also been applied to marine and land-based operations from Antarctica to Mongolia.

While primarily a safety device, spidertracks is increasingly being used as a planning and logistics aid by fleet operators around the world. The company was recently awarded the Supreme Winner honour at the 2008 Manawatu Business Awards, recognising its rapid growth and successful strategies.



User Testimonial spidertracks at HELiPRO

HELiPRO is one of the country's largest aviation operators, with 35 helicopters and 15 fixed wing aircraft. They have bases in Palmerston North, Wellington, Paraparaumu, Christchurch, Rotorua and Taupo. A third of their business is in tourism, a third flight training and a third commercial operations including firefighting, lifting and powerline operations in New Zealand and in Australia.

The company has its own sophisticated flight following system which it marries to the spidertracks tracking. If a craft is more than a minute overdue an alarm system is activated across the company bases. One of the first things they do is click on to spidertracks to see if the aircraft is still moving and what its last reported position was. HELiPRO Business Manager John Read explains "If the situation arose where we haven't managed to raise the pilot within 15 minutes we would put our own helicopters into the air and send them to where the spidertracks system recorded their last position, speed and altitude."

John says they are committed to the system because it enables them to identify exactly where an aircraft or helicopter is in the event of an incident. But, he says, the ease of use is also ideal for the HELiPRO operation.

"We have spidertracks so we can locate any aircraft in our fleet at any given time. It's a vital part of our safety procedures. But spidertracks is also great because of its ease of use and ease of installation. We chose spidertracks because it is simple, cost effective and because there are no installation costs. There are plenty of units on the market that are quite complex. It doesn't need to be complex - we wouldn't use any more features."



HELiPRO currently have 17 spidertracks and move them amongst their fleet as required. They are planning to equip all their aircraft with the system over time.

HELiPRO also make use of the portability of spidertracks. "We have 17 units in our helicopters and we move them between our training craft as required. We're slowly rolling them out across the whole fleet."

"And we wanted to support a local company - but it's gone beyond that now. The product and the system is superior to anything else on the market."

His advice to people looking to purchase a satellite tracking system is to think about what you are buying it for and not to buy into a complex system with a lot of extra functions that you may never use.

Who's watching out for you?

No one but you.

So take control - make sure your family and friends know where you and your passengers are.

Spidertracks will track you wherever you want to fly, including over New Zealand's wildest terrain.

Family and friends can go online to see where you are - so no one has to worry.

With support from Airways NZ, buying peace of mind will never be cheaper than right now.

For a limited time only
get spidertracks for
\$1295
+ GST*

SAVE \$2605



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