



S-O150-04 (DW1231861-0)

25 October 2011

The CEO
Federated farmers
PO Box 715
WELLINGTON 6140

Dear Sir

Agricultural Aviation Low Level Operations - Wire Strikes

I write to ask you to alert your member farmers to a dangerous situation and one that can be addressed at little cost.

During recent discussions with an aviation industry forum, it came to our attention that some farmers have a practice of running electric fence feeder wires across gullies when they are getting the power out to a fence line. Best practice is to tie these wires down so they follow the contour of the land. All wires that cannot be placed as low as is practicably possible must be specifically discussed and identified on map to the pilot. There are two factors that greatly increase the risk of wire strikes to agricultural pilots.

- Unlike power-lines and wires that run from pole to pole, feeder wires often run along the top of a fence or if there is no fence, they will be nailed to trees, sheds and other structures. The presence of poles alerts the pilot to the existence of wire(s) as pilots are trained to look for poles as a clue. Often in the case of feeder wires, once the wire leaves the proximity of a structure and becomes elevated there is no such clue that a wire lies ahead.
- At least one wire manufacturer is now colouring its wire green. That of course camouflages the wire even better.

A requirement of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (the Act), is that

- Employers are required to take all practicable steps to provide a safe working environment, and
- Principals are required to take all practicable steps to ensure that no employee of a contractor, or if an individual, no contractor is harmed while doing work that the contractor was engaged to do.

It is clearly not safe to run wires across gullies then require pilots to carry out low level operations over that property. We believe that this is an obvious and clear breach of the requirements of the Act.

Wire strikes can kill pilots. A pilot in Gisborne has hit and fortunately survived two strikes with feeder wires. One was 60' above the ground, the other was 400'.

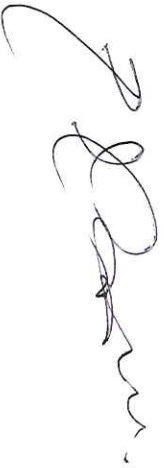
I ask that you inform your member farmers of the following:

Where it is proposed that any wire is to cross a gully or other open area, the wire is to:

- a) Follow a fence line with the wire tied down onto the fence it is following so that the wire follows the contour of the fence, or
 - b) If a fence is not available to tie the wire down to, find a different method, for example by using poles, but in that case the wire should be no more than at normal pole height.
- It follows that clear identification of the wire is given to the pilot.

Your attention to this important and concerning matter is appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Ed Randell
Manager, Health and Safety Unit
Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand